JOSSELYN'S WIFE

Kathleen Norris

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BY

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To
HELEN AND FRED

JOSSELYN'S WIFE

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CHAPTER I

ELLEN LATIMER reached the big station just before the rain began to fall, and whisked into its gloomy depths with a smile of triumph on her pretty gipsy face. Her suit had just been pressed, and her hat was new; it would have been a calamity to have them get wet. Aunt Elsie had cautioned her to carry her umbrella that morning, and Ellen had merely shaken her head; the November sky was dark and low, it was true, but they were reaching the season now when they might look for snow, not rain.

However, now it was raining, and she had escaped it undeservedly. Ellen followed the line of hurrying Long Island commuters down the long arcade, her own feet adding to the unceasing crisp and shuffle of a thousand other feet. She went past the paper stand, where laden men were slapping down pennies and rushing on with hardly a perceptible pause, and where young boys and girls were buying packages of gum and chocolates, and where all the pretty girls in the world were smiling from the brilliant covers of magazines; girls peeling pumpkins, in demure kitchen ginghams, and girls furred to the eyes, going to football games with pennants over their shoulders, for Thanksgiving was close at hand. And she went past the clock that was watched by so many patient and eager eyes, and the

empty bootblack stand where a tired woman had established herself and her babies, and so came to the special gate among a dozen gates where a red boxed sign showed the words "Express Port Washington 5:22." Already a hundred tired men and women, in sober wet-weather clothing, were pressed against this gate, and Ellen pressed with them. She had spent the morning, as usual, at the Art Students' League, but she had deliberately loitered about the city, all the afternoon, in the hope that Ellis Thorpe would join her on this train. Ellen's destination was Port Washington, a quiet old village at the terminus of the line, but Ellis lived at Douglaston, which was a fashionable modern colony, four miles nearer New York.

Ellen did not know him well: they had been introduced in the train, and never met elsewhere. Ellis was only nineteen, still in High School, and the girl was more than three years older. But, for want of more appropriate admiration, she enjoyed his, and she made room for him beside her in the seat to-night with a welcoming smile.

He was a handsome boy, with rain on his thick, rough suit, and on his absurd yellow oxfords, and on his pale gray felt hat. Ellen thought him marvellously well-dressed, an opinion the youth innocently shared. She knew only a few men, and she was at an age that hungers for their company.

They talked only of themselves as the train tore on its noisy way. Ellen talked of her day's experiences at the Art League, and her starry beauty, and the flash of her blue eyes, under the new, fur-trimmed hat, and the infectious gaiety of her laugh, lent the dull subject a sudden charm. Young Thorpe was personal

in his replies; his was the type that renders personalities inoffensive, and Ellen flushed with amusement and pleasure, and turned from his merciless stare to smile at her own reflection in the dark car window.

It was a lovely reflection. The laughing eyes were a deep Irish blue, with soft shadows and long sooty lashes accentuating their essential innocence. The skin had a pure and healthy pallor, except on the high cheekbones, where there was a brilliant touch of colour, and Ellen's mouth was wide, like her Irish mother's, kindly, humorous, the thin lips exquisitely red, the big teeth shining. Her hair was a satiny black, and to-night the rain had curled it, and little strands had blown up against the fur of her hat. Ellen thought, herself, that she was pretty, but the thought rarely gave her any pleasure. What was the use of mere beauty if one lacked every other good thing in the world? She was poor, ambitious, eager for life, ignorant as to the means of gaining her place in the world.

Her father's father had been a sea captain. He was an old man now, living with a vigorous widowed daughter, Ellen's Aunt Elsie. The two had made a home for Ellen and little Joe when Ellen's father, several years after her mother, had died ten years ago. Her father's business had been vaguely connected with ships, too; he had a little office on a dock, in the city, and sometimes took the children there on Sunday afternoons in summer, calling various men he met "Dan" and "George," and being called "Joe" by them in return. In these days the children boarded with him in a quiet old house in Christopher Street, and Mrs. Daley, the landlady, washed them tremendously before

school each morning, and scolded them about their clothes.

At least once a month their father took them down to Port Washington, eighteen miles away from New York on the Sound side of Long Island, to see Grandpa Latimer and Aunt Elsie, in the old-fashioned house on Main Street, and sometimes he left them there for a week or two, in summer, and they swam and boated and wandered along the shore as happy as the clams that shot streams of water over their boots, or the puppy that gambled in their wake. Aunt Elsie worried and fussed over them constantly, and Grandpa was notably inhospitable, but they did not notice grown persons in these care-free days, and were always sorry to go back to Christopher Street.

But with their father's sudden death everything was changed. They said good-bye to the weeping Mrs. Daley forever, and went to live with Aunt Elsie in the Main Street house. Ellen was twelve then, and sensitive, and Joe, at eight, was beginning to be unmanageable. Grandpa, idle, and shelved after a life of high adventure, resented their noise and their claims. And Aunt Elsie's way of enjoying life was to worry and fret, fume and scold and fuss. Ellen never realized this; she always believed that Aunt Elsie might have been happier had domestic events run more smoothly. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Baldwin was supremely happy, in her own way.

Ellen went to the village school, and then to High School, always with the dread in her young heart that after High School she would have to "work." To her there seemed something dreadful in the idea of becoming a working woman. She decided that she would go

away, if this necessity came upon her, she would become a nurse, in a trim white uniform, and there would be, in the hospital, a stunning young doctor. . . .

However, just before her graduation, a miracle happened. On a certain July day, when there were a million roses in bloom in the old garden, Mrs. E. Sewall Rose came to call on Aunt Elsie. Her car waited at the gate, she was on her way to Sands Point, the fashionable colony of a score of seaside homes two miles away. She was large, perfumed, beautiful, and kindly. She kissed Ellen, and called her "Nellie Buckley's girl," and she told Ellen that she had loved her mother. They had been girls together in a convent boarding-school.

"The Buckleys were lovely people," said this enchanting visitor, "and Nellie was an angel. They had a great deal of money then; I went to drive with her many a time behind a pair of the handsomest horses you ever saw. Whatever happened. . . ?"

Aunt Elsie said something of speculations; it was all long ago. The Buckleys were all scattered and dead. She sighed with sad enjoyment.

The visitor roamed about the parlour, with its shells and albums and antimacassars, and its embroidered mantel drapery, and glass tube of sand from Palestine. The summer sunlight came in under the green shades, and through the stiff lace curtains, and the canary, over a window full of potted plants, broke into song.

She came upon some of Ellen's school work, and asked Ellen questions. And Ellen told her with shy eagerness that she had hoped to be an artist; she had gotten all the highest marks, and once had won a prize. Mrs. E. Sewall Rose asked her where she was going to study.

Aunt Elsie answered this question. Ellen had no time for fooling; she was going to work; they had the boy to raise, and Father felt they had done all that duty required. It was time now for Ellen to realize that life wasn't all prettiness and play.

She said it pleasantly enough, and the background of the comfortable home, and pretty Ellen, in her carefully made gingham, and the plate of crullers and the decanter of wild cherry wine were all there to soften it. But a week later Mrs. E. Sewall Rose wrote to Aunt Elsie, and sent a check that was to cover all the expenses; commutation-ticket, lunches, materials, and fees, for Ellen's first quarter at the Art Students' League. Ellen mounted straight into Paradise. To tell the girls—to let it casually drop that her life was not to be as other lives—to spend her mornings in a real studio, with real workers—it was Heaven indeed. Ah, how she would work, how she would advance, how proud they would all be some day!

She fairly rushed into it. She was the most earnest, the most tremblingly happy, of all the earnest, trembling beginners that fall. And she did succeed. Her honesty, and her simplicity, and her pure and fiery ambition, made her a marked figure in the classes from the beginning. She was pretty, and she naturally loved admiration, but she did not recognize harm, and her soul slipped from it unscathed. There were a great many silly girls in the art classes, and a few serious ones, like Ellen. The boys were dark, earnest young Hebrews for the most part, risen from emigrant homes; poor, shabby, sometimes hungry, but making steadily for their goal. Other boys were there, too, lounging, unkempt youths, who meant to "get into the news-

paper game." Olga Briner, a pretty Russian girl of whom Ellen was fond, said, with what Ellen thought profound truth, one day: "These boys are fun. But the sort of men you and I could marry are in college at these years."

Perhaps two or three times during the winter Mrs. Rose asked her protégée to lunch with her. She would be on a shopping trip, furred, and scented with violets, and she would make Ellen order all sorts of expensive dishes. Mrs. Rose herself generally played with clear bouillon and cold chicken, but she made Ellen have sweets, at the end, and smiled at her as she sipped black coffee. The girl went back to her work with a flushed face and a dancing heart. All afternoon she would be living over their conversation; had she talked too much? had she talked foolishly?

So two terms, three terms, went by. And now Ellen was well into a fourth, and felt herself no nearer a livelihood than she had been at the end of the first. How did a woman begin to support herself by art? Some of the boys did really drift into newspaper offices, but what they did there seemed to be errands and answering the telephones and rushing about town upon uninteresting investigations, rather than sitting at drawing-boards. Ellen could not do that. Nor could she open a studio on Washington Square, and go about from office to office of the magazines selling pictures.

A deep discontent fell upon her, and she began to turn to the world-old refuge of women: she would marry. Then, when the urgent financial question was laid at rest, she might begin to make her way.

She knew that Ellis Thorpe came of a good family,

for he spoke of "Mother's dinners," and "the year Sis came out," and he was sometimes met at the train by a motor-car. Ellen innocently decided that Ellis would "do," in spite of the humiliating discrepancy in their ages. If he asked to call some day, she would ask him to dinner. That would be the beginning.

He left her at Douglaston, and looking out into the black night to smile a good-bye, she saw with satisfaction that the rain had really turned to a fine snow, the first of the season. Her hat was safe.

And Joe, with an umbrella, met her with the first rush of pure country air, at the station. Ellen, whose Celtic heart was always eagerly reaching for evidences of affection in this adored younger brother, thought this wonderfully sweet in Joe.

He was a big, lumbering, loosely-built lad of eighteen, in muddy boots, rough corduroy trousers, and with a gray sweater's rolling collar touching his ears. Winter and summer Joe lived in this or a similar sweater. His untidy black hair fell in a long lock between his handsome black eyes; he grinned amiably at his sister.

"Joe, you are a darling!" Ellen said gratefully. "Aunt Elsie would have scolded me. Did you come right out again, when you got home, to meet me?"

"No, I've been home all afternoon, fooling 'round." Joe yawned. "I fixed a coal-box on the back porch for Aunt Elsie. All you've gotter do is have the feller slide in half a ton, and she doesn't have to go down cellar at all!"

"But what about Bates?" Ellen asked anxiously. For Joe's latest employment had been with a contractor named Bates. Joe had declined High School, and had

driven the village grocery wagon during his fifteenth year. Then he had worked with the plumber, and the electrician. After that he had worked upon a private yacht for a whole summer, had lived in New York for a few months, deeply enjoying his initiation into the work of a cub reporter, and only two weeks ago, upon Grandpa Latimer becoming distrustful of the effect upon so young a boy of boarding in the city, Joe had indifferently and good naturedly returned home, and engaged himself to Bates.

"Can't work this weather!" he reminded his sister, keeping beside her, but refusing to share the umbrella.

"I wish Grandpa had left you with the *Tribune!*" Ellen said. "You could have gone in on the seven train, and gotten the six back!"

"Sure I could!" agreed Joe, with another yawn. Ellen looked at him, and sighed sharply. Joe was utterly devoid of ambition.

The Latimer house was on the right side of Main Street, perhaps the tenth or twelfth in an unbroken line of fenced, old-fashioned village homes. On the left side of the wandering street, which curved half a mile downhill to the shore of Manhasset Bay, several orderly blocks had been outlined, but the houses on the right hung on the edge of a hill, and behind them was only old farmland. All these houses had flat gardens in front, and big trees. All were wooden, and simple of design: four windows separated by a porch door downstairs, five windows in an unbroken row upstairs, looking out upon the porch roof. There was a definite, primitive beauty about them; they were old, and age had somewhat softened their ugliness; their small-paned windows radiated homely cheer. But Ellen

saw no beauty here, she longed for one of the modern, smaller houses up toward Flower Hill; houses with bathrooms in them, and electric light, and fireplace and furnaces; houses with wide windows, and shingles and white paint.

The Latimer house was warmed downstairs by two air-tight stoves and upstairs by such currents of softened air as emanated from these homely but useful articles. Also there was a large kitchen range, built solidly in a brick frame, with a cast-iron top, in which there was only one circular opening, and four graded rings of iron to fill the opening. There had been five rings once, but Joe had lost the littlest one, to Aunt Elsie's abiding grief. Since then there had always been a tiny round hole on the very top of the fire, into which a child might glance at the blue heart of the flames. This stove radiated a glorious heat, and on cold mornings the family breakfasted in the kitchen, with winter sunshine pouring in the window, and toast and eggs and coffee smoking hot from the fire; a dazzle of snow without, and all comfort and cheer within. But Ellen never told her friends at the League that she breakfasted in the kitchen.

To-night her aunt nodded to her from the stove, and Ellen, who had hung up her hat and coat, smiled back as she warmed her hands over the glow. There was a delicious smell in the kitchen. Mrs. Baldwin was a stubborn cook, not apt to learn new ways of doing things, and inclined to sniff at talk of calories and phosphates and the balance of starches and fats. But she cooked a great many things with skill, and was justly proud of her art. Her mood never came so close to gaiety as when Joe shouted over her layer-cakes and

waffles, or when, as now, Ellen gave a deep smiling sigh at the sight of creamed mutton stew with dumplings, corn pudding, and fried sweet potatoes.

"Oo—Aunty! What a good dinner! And I'm starving."

"Well, I hope you'll get enough," Mrs. Baldwin said, with the little nervous twitch of her countenance that passed for a smile. "I don't know what possesses the meat—they don't give you the meat now they did ten years ago. You cook the taste all out of it, and then it's as tough as your shoe. I s'pose you didn't think to tell Joe to leave his shoes outside the door or else come in through the laundry. It'd be a relief to me, Ellen, if you'd try to think of it now and then. I can't wait on you folks like you were babies, forever. There's a letter for you up by the clock. Go tell Grandpa supper's ready, and see if I've left anything off the table. . . ."

Ellen escaped the tireless voice. She went into the living room, a rather small room where the round table was already set for supper. One of the air-tight stoves was here, and near it sat old Captain Latimer, with his thin silky white hair brushed scrupulously, and his old carpet slippers resting on the nickel-plated shield of the stove. He wore old gray trousers, and a brown jacket he called his "Cadogan," and over his chest a thin beard flowed, as white as milk. His sharp eyes were bright blue, in a clean, weather-beaten face. He was reading the Port Washington *News*.

"Do, Ellin?" he said, in a sharp, high old voice. "Don't Elsie p'pose to give us no supper t'night?"

"Two seconds, Grandpa!" Ellen answered absent-mindedly. Her eyes were only for her letter, a big

square letter, standing by the carved and filagreed Swiss clock on the mantel. Who was it from? Ah! it was from Mrs. Rose, of course.

Two minutes later the exulting Ellen was back in the kitchen.

"Aunt Elsie, isn't this wonderful? Isn't this just lovely? Mrs. Rose wants me to go to her Thanksgiving house party. Her son, that's Arthur, and the girl, Lucia, are going to have a lot of friends at Hastings-on-Hudson! Oh, I think she's a darling to want me. And here's my ticket and all—my made-over gray dress, and my lace dress—doesn't it just seem as if my clothes were made for this special thing? And she signs it: 'Your friend, Abby Carnaby Rose'; I think Carnaby's a stunning name——"

Thus Ellen, stuttering and stumbling in her joy and excitement, and all the while automatically assisting in the process of "dishing up." She took the glass-towel her aunt handed her, tucked the precious letter into her blouse, engineered the bubbling dish of corn to a cold plate, decorated a platter of stew with puffy dumplings, and finally bore the latter in to the dining room. Mrs. Baldwin followed with a glazed brown tea pot and other delicacies. Ellen had to rush back for a second load, rush back a third time to hang up her tea-towel; finally a jerk of her foot brought her chair to the table, and Joe, entering through the kitchen, placed his grandfather's chair, and gave the stiff old man a helping hand.

The little room, filled with useless possessions of every description, was already warm from the stove, now the steam from cooked meat and strong tea rose in the air. They were all hungry, and ate fast. Ellen propped her letter against the tea pot, and regaled her

family upon the delights of winter house parties among the upper classes; Joe listened with a grin; the old Captain drank his tea noisily from his saucer, and removed from his mouth portions of the stew too hard for mastication. Mrs. Baldwin, who had been a baby in his arms fifty years before, a dutiful little daughter, an admiring comrade, was his mother now. She crushed the hard crusts of his toast, and over-sweetened his tea, and saw that he had plenty of soft food. Now and then she told him bits of village gossip; that Captain Johnny wasn't so well, and she shouldn't wonder if the Robbinses moved down to the Cherry Place. He could no more offend her than might a baby of two years. Joe's own conduct at the table was almost equally open to criticism, and Ellen was too used to her grandfather to suffer from his manner, so that great harmony reigned in the house on Main Street. Ellen had had her times of objecting to the country custom of putting the dessert on the table with the dinner, and to the little old-fashioned butter-plates, but her aunt, after an intensely practical life, had small patience with these affectations, and the girl's ideas of gentility were too vague, even in her own mind, to make much impression. To-night she saw nothing and heard nothing; she was going to visit at a fashionable country house; she was beginning to live!

There were difficulties to be met, of course. The first was the surprising resentment of Aunt Elsie. Thanksgiving was a home day. Aunt Elsie didn't like the idea of Ellen going off with a lot of godless people; dancing, as likely as not, getting her head full of crack-brained ideas——

"Well, I don't like the idea of old-fashioned Thanksgiving!" Ellen answered, trying not to sound impertinent. "We all eat too much, and the house gets too hot, and you're working for three days baking and fussing!"

She did not dream that she struck to her aunt's heart. The national holiday was a sacred institution to Mrs. Baldwin. The turkey and mince pies were on her mind for many happy, bustling days. She always had Cousin Tom and Ella and their two—or three, or four—babies, over from Roslyn for the whole day, and she liked them to praise her food. She liked to have both the air-tight stoves red hot, and Ella, thin and radiant, gossiping at the end of her kitchen table while the babies napped. And now Ellen—Ellen was disparaging Thanksgiving!

The two were in Ellen's bedroom when this conversation took place, and Mrs. Baldwin turned and went downstairs without a word. Ellen stood still, in the centre of the ice-cold room, her face flushed with shame, the gaudy patchwork quilt she was about to spread over her newly made bed hanging from her hands. Outside the sun was shining on the first heavy fall of snow, boys were sliding down Main Street with wild shrieks. The trolley car grated by, and Ellen saw Joe flounder down the snowy path and begin to shovel snow from about the blocked gate. His aunt, her checked apron over her head, called him from the steps; she had his thick woollen gloves, and also something edible that Joe was munching as he shuffled back to his work.

Ellen's heart smote her. They *would* miss her on Thanksgiving Day. But what could she do? Noth-

ing in life seemed so important as Mrs. Rose's wonderful invitation.

When she went downstairs, there was a decided chill in her aunt's attitude. Mrs. Baldwin was reading from the paper a sheriff's vendue notice that was printed too finely for the old Captain's glasses to decipher, and he was listening with his white head cocked like a spaniel's. It was Sunday, and the older woman was neatly dressed for church. She enjoyed church, and would come home at half-past twelve rosy from the cold air, and full of kindly gossip. She would walk down to the post-office for the mail, too; there was rarely any mail, but all the world of Port Washington would be there.

The house was still. Captain Latimer pushed his glasses up on his forehead, and went to sleep. The canary burst into song; fell silent again. Out in the spotlessly clean kitchen the clock ticked and ticked. Ellen would have liked to sew on her fancy-work, but her aunt would not let her sew on Sunday. So she began to read. She felt guilty. She wished that she were heroic enough to give up the Rose week-end, and stay here and help Aunt Elsie through Thanksgiving.

Mrs. Baldwin brought back one letter, after all. It was from Mrs. Rose, for Ellen. It said that Mrs. Rose was delighted that Ellen could be with them, and that she would expect her on the two o'clock train from New York—on Friday! So that Ellen would have Thanksgiving at home, after all.

"Well, I guess you're not too good for some white meat and fixings, party or no party!" Mrs. Baldwin said drily. Ellen could find nothing to say.

The question of clothes remained. Even when

Ellen had run fresh ribbons into her best underwear, and had washed her one pair of silk stockings, and had pressed the cheap yet dainty lace gown, and basted fresh frills into the neck and cuffs of the made-over gray velvet; even then she felt some misgivings. She had the dresses, but what about all the accessories? She did not even know what they were; much less did she own them. Combs, pins, hair-ornaments, scarfs, and belts flitted uneasily through her dreams. She woke, in the cold winter mornings, filled with wretched doubts. But at night, when her lamp, and the stove in the hall downstairs, had somewhat warmed her room, she sat at her mirror, and looked at the lovely vision of rosy cheeks and shy eyes and loosened black hair; and the red lips would curve in spite of themselves into a confident smile.

Might she be the belle of the whole party? . . . might they all admire her? Might it be a glorious triumph for the newcomer, the beginning of wonderful things. Ellen would jump between the cold, heavy sheets with a smile still in her eyes, and go off to dreams of glory.

CHAPTER II

All the way up in the train she was busy identifying the various groups about her, as either being bound for the Rose house party, or being unworthy of that classification. Ellen was so excited by this time that she could not breathe naturally; her cheeks were blazing, and her heart beat fast. With her little new suitcase—it was Joe's, and she had given it to him on his birthday a few weeks before—she got down from the train in a sort of joyous panic of expectation. The Roses's chauffeur made himself known, and Ellen, a gray-haired, elderly man, and an exceptionally handsome and self-possessed young woman, all got into the limousine. The two bags that were now associated with Ellen's bag were the finest of their kind, and were plastered with the labels of European hotels. Ellen imagined the pair to be father and daughter, and thought it would be romantic to be rich, and travel abroad with an adoring father.

The lady looked at her amiably enough, but did not speak. Long afterward Ellen realized the absurdity of their two-mile drive in silence; the other two occasionally murmuring a comment upon the scenery, and smiling vaguely when their eyes encountered Ellen. Presently they turned in at a snow-powdered gate and could see a splendid stone mansion, lying along a hillside draped in bare vines, but with heartening smoke arising from a dozen chimneys.

"Isn't that a lovely house!" Ellen said shyly then, and the old man nodded smilingly, while the lady said with a sort of languid sweetness:

"Isn't it, though! I've never seen it before."

"Nor I," Ellen said eagerly, glad not to be the only stranger.

"I designed it for them," the old man said casually, and the lady said, "Oh, did you, dearest? You smart boy!"

This did not sound exactly daughterly. Ellen was puzzling over their relationship as they all went up the stone steps, and were admitted to an enormous warm hall, where fires and tables and rich rugs and great bowls of flowers all were jumbled together before her confused senses. Here was Mrs. Rose, magnificent and distrait, murmuring that the children were about somewhere, perhaps they had gone out, giving a maid directions in an aside, and looking a little blankly at Ellen until the girl reminded her brightly: "It's Ellen Latimer!"

"Well, of course it is, you dear child," she said then, with a warming kiss, "and you came up in the car with Mr. and Mrs. Josselyn. Tom, this is a little friend of mine, Miss Latimer; and this is Mr. and Mrs. Josselyn, Ellen. I hope you all talked to each other?"

Ellen was just going to say, "We weren't introduced," but the young and beautiful Mrs. Josselyn spoke first, with a sort of pretty langour, "I always talk, on all occasions!" and then they all laughed. Ellen knew, suddenly, that the two women did not know each other very well, and that the man was quite at home in this house.

"Where'd you put us, Abby?" he asked. "Don't come up; I know my way about."

"I've got to go up," Mrs. Rose said, interrupting a low-toned conversation she was having with an elderly maid. "I declare," she went on, mounting a dark, carved stairway that was spread with rugs, ornamented with potted palms, and lighted with a stained-glass window, "I declare, I get perfectly frantic sometimes, when the children have these affairs. Arthur brought down four boys from Harvard on Wednesday, and Lucia—presumably not out yet, if you please!—all I can say is, that I don't expect to live through it until she *is* out!—and it's rush to this, and rush to that—I don't know what they're doing now——"

Ellen perceived that the matron was really deeply enjoying the responsibility and confusion, and the strain on meals and beds. They were upstairs now, and had left the Josselyns at the door of a delightful room.

"Which explains," said Mrs. Rose, "why I've tucked you in here, on a couch in my sewing-room, my dear. Lucia should have moved in here, but she has three girls with her, and they all had to be together, of course. Girls do have the *best* times, nowadays! Or these girls do. Just one good time after another! Now you're in here, and you see you use my bath. You needn't hesitate to come in and out, for Mr. Rose is up at Great Barrington, for the golf. It's the sewing-room, but I had Pauline clear it out——"

"It's lovely," Ellen smiled. "It's a perfectly wonderful house," she added bashfully.

"It's comfortable," Mrs. Rose said carelessly. "Josselyn did it." And with a sudden twinkle she added: "How did you like the bride and groom?"

"I thought they were father and daughter!"

"Everyone does. I've known Tom Josselyn all my life, we knew his first wife well. She only died a year ago, and ten months later he married this—Lillian Keeler. Nobody knows anything about her. Doris Potter—you'll meet her to-night—says that she was a model for Madame Yvonne, but I don't believe it. Young Gibbs Josselyn, the son—one of the dearest fellows that ever lived—has never gotten over it. Tom Josselyn is sixty-five, you know, and she's twenty-eight. He broke with his father the day he heard the news, hasn't seen him since. He was in the firm, too, I guess the old man felt it pretty much. Now I hear that Gibbs is going to study painting—he's a gifted fellow. . . . Well! now I'll leave you. Brush up a little, and then come down and have tea. There's nothing to-night; I believe the boys have got a moving picture machine and they're going to try it in the ballroom, but I'm not having a dinner, really."

It was just like an English house party in a novel. Ellen smoothed her hair, and put on the gray velvet dress with the fresh frills, and went down to the library in a tremor of happiness. She was early, and had time to enjoy a book of photographs and a fire before her hostess came down. Then the Josselyns came, and an old aunt of Mrs. Rose, and two friends of the aunt, paying a tea-call. Ellen was much the youngest, and Mrs. Rose enchanted her by letting her pass sandwiches and toast, and bring back the cups for more tea. It was a wonderful hour. Ellen glowed, and even chattered, and they all enjoyed her.

She was able to see now how really beautiful young Mrs. Josselyn was. The bride sat a little apart from the others, with her splendid brown eyes on the fire,

and her beautiful body stretched at ease in a great chair. Her golden brown hair was wound carelessly in glorious waves and coils above her white forehead, and her white hand, heavily ringed, lay against the dark wood of the chair-arm with all the pure beauty of alabaster. She sometimes raised her glittering eye-lashes, brown eye-lashes with a hint of gold in them, to smile lazily at her husband, but for the most part she was inert, making no effort to be more than a lovely picture.

Mrs. Rose asked her about Paris, and she answered casually. Ellen did not know that she was trying to make the older woman think that travel, wealth, and the free purchase of gowns and jewels were but an ordinary part of the day's work to Lillian Keeler. She did not know that Mrs. Rose was trying to find out several much-discussed facts about the bride. Professor and Mrs. Keeler of Milton were not relatives of Mrs. Josselyn, were they? Mrs. Josselyn smiled at the fire, and contented herself with a single negative monosyllable. But Ellen was deeply interested and even thrilled by their talk. Her loyalty and affection were bound to Mrs. Rose; she decided that young Mrs. Josselyn was not a gentlewoman. All those blazing jewels at informal tea! Just above the mantel was a superb portrait of Mrs. Rose, painted when she was in deep mourning for her first husband, with little Arthur and the younger Lucia at her knee. About the handsome widow's neck was a splendid string of pearls; her kindly eyes smiled down at Ellen, and Ellen smiled back. The girl did not question the wearer of the pearls, nor the propriety of this picture's position in Edward Sewall Rose's house. The Queen could do no wrong.

A great grandfather's clock in the dimness of the room

boomed half-past five. And with a cold and joyous rush, the youngsters came in for their tea.

That was Ellen Latimer's last happy minute in the Rose house. The little velvet dress did not fall from her as the clock struck, but she would have been happier running away from them all into the night, bare of feet and hair, and in her shabbiest kitchen dress, than she was to be here, in all their luxury and warmth.

They were introduced, and they nodded, flinging furs and wraps into the arms of silent, patient, waiting maids. Ellen marvelled at their sports-clothes, the soft Swiss coats, the smart, shaggy little caps, the velvet skirts with their big buttons, the silk blouses so immaculately white. Lucia was not pretty, but how smart she was, and how she chattered! Doris was pretty, and everything else that Ellen would have liked to be as well. The five boys were all quite young, fresh-faced, well-groomed, superficially poised in spite of their youthful clumsiness. There were nine of them, altogether. They talked only to each other, in a sort of running fire of growling and tittering and laughing. It was impossible for an outsider to follow their conversation, and even when the older people had drifted away, and Ellen was left with them, they made no concessions for her.

She was in a chair, in the very centre of the group. So much was an advantage. And she had had her tea, so that their rather obvious indifference to her comfort had some excuse. But she was miserably unhappy.

"You're on my foot, Larry!"

"Get off her foot—get off her foot!"

"Is no girl safe?"

"Listen, do any of you want anything? Mother said you gents could have cocktails—tell him to bring some cocktails, Art."

"Then I'll wait. Red's going to give me half of his, aren't you, Red?"

"Curses on this snow, I thought you said we could play golf all Saturday!"

"Betty, you know what I told you this morning? Well, it's true. Isn't it, Red?"

"About——?"

"About—you know."

"Doris said it was, anyway."

"I didn't know you were calling me anything but Miss Potter, Mr. Everett."

"Oh, didn't you, Snooky-ookums? What would ums yike me to call it?"

"Oh, Red, don't be so sickening!"

"Listen, girls, we want to know about this German to-morrow night. Who's going to have it with who? I hate Germans, Lucia. Let's cut out the German——"

"What are you whispering about, Dorothy?"

"Lean over here and I'll tell you!"

There was a contagious ripple of laughter, some whispering and monosyllables. Ellen turned to the youth who was slowly sipping a cocktail next to her and said, uncertainly:

"Will you have a sandwich—oh, you have one?"

He looked at her vaguely, and leaning to the girl who was sitting on the floor at his knee he said earnestly:

"Say, listen, Dorothy. I meant what I said about the seventh hole. If he said he did it in that, he lied. It can't be done. Kidder himself takes three to it, and is it likely that that boob could cut it down? Now

listen, I suppose the links 'll be closed up for awhile. But if we come down here Christmas—my mother is in Paris, so if Arthur's mother asks us we'll probably come—I'd like to take that feller up there——"

Ellen's face burned. She did not speak again

Oh, what a fool she was to come here at all, she thought, undressing late that night. And how she hated them all! They felt her unwelcome, and shabby, and different, and the bitter thing was that Ellen knew that they were right. She could not speak their language, nor understand them when they spoke; her little attempts at merriment fell flat, her best gown was not as smart as their simplest sporting outfit. She had gone downstairs timidly, in the fussy little lace dress, to have them presently follow in their exquisite simplicities of sheer linen and lawn, with girlish touches of pink baby roses or childish wide Roman sashes, plain silk stockings, plainly dressed little satiny heads, with jewelled pins tucked trimly against the coils and plaits. How fresh, how virginal, they were; school girls just on the threshold of womanhood, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen! Ellen's twenty-two years seemed suddenly grimy and gray. A sense of injustice seized her. She had never been as young and sweet and confident as they were!

They were all in love with life, and with each other; it was a pity that they could not spare a little love for Ellen, too. But Dorothy complimented Lucia, and Lucia, Doris, and Doris in turn told Mary that she looked adorable. No one of them gave to Ellen the word for which she hungered, or, better than praise, made the slightest effort to bring her into the group,

gave her any reason to believe that with eyes like hers, and cheeks like hers, the lace gown mattered not at all.

The elaborate dinner was served, the moving-pictures finally brought to triumphant finish, and the young people began to dance. Then Ellen slipped upstairs, equally unable to review the events of the day, or to anticipate those of to-morrow, with any equanimity. There would be a big dance to-morrow night, and a ride to the "Red Lion" for lunch. Ellen did not ride. Well, she would go with old Mr. Josselyn and Mrs. Rose in the closed car. Unless she had a wire from Aunt Elsie saying that Grandpa was dead—ah, if only she might!

But Grandpa was far from death, and Saturday had to be endured. It was all worse than Ellen's fears. Mrs. Rose was not going on the ride, after all, she and the aunt and the Josselyns were going to play bridge. Lucia unbent from her indifference long enough to urge Ellen to try to ride. But Ellen, although she was eager to dare it, did not like to risk the danger of making herself absurd on a horse. Afterward, she never quite forgave herself her cowardice. Better to chance it, better to be thrown, be maimed for life, than to do what she did.

There was another choice, but that, too, Ellen did not see until long afterward. She might simply have pleaded indisposition, have begged to be left quietly at home, and so have watched the bridge, which interested her, and have had another pleasant tea-hour.

But instead she let Lucia separate herself from her friends to drive the funny girl from Long Island in a small roadster. The roads were heavy, but Ellen knew

nothing of cars, and did not know that really difficult driving was angering the already exasperated Lucia. For perhaps fifteen minutes out of the long two hours the girls talked naturally, and then it chanced to be about the Josselyns. Lucia spoke of the new wife contemptuously, and Ellen asked her if she knew the son.

Knew Gibbs? Indeed she did. Lucia's pretty colour rose as she spoke. Gibbs was—well, he had always been like her brother, don't you know? He had given her the odd topaz ring she wore. And now the girls were teasing her about Gibbs, which was perfectly absurd. Of course she adored Gibbs, but he was thirty at least, or thirty-one—and somehow she didn't want to think of those things at all, yet.

Ellen, in her simplicity, believed her, and although she had never seen Thomas Gibbs Josselyn, Junior, a faint pang of something like envy stirred at her heart. Lucia had everything.

They reached the "Red Lion" an hour after the others, and immediately had a large and noisy lunch in a sort of club lunchroom, with stags' antlers and bearskins, a roaring open fire, and exposed rafters of dark wood to give a rustic effect. After lunch skis were brought out, and Ellen was dragged several cold miles on a sort of combination walk, scramble, slide, and skate. The boy called "Red" drove her silently home; he had had a good many cocktails before and after the walk, and drove recklessly.

They got home none too early to dress for the dance, an experience that Ellen never forgot. The young guests in the house had been indifferent to her yesterday; to-day they actively disliked her, and she afforded

them delicious material for laughter. Mrs. Rose was again playing bridge after dinner, but Ellen could not watch the game now, for her hostess felt the social responsibility, and would chill Ellen to the soul by saying: "Wait until I'm dummy, dear, and I'll find you someone to dance with."

So Ellen kept away from the card room, and loitered about miserably. No one asked her to dance, she might have been an invisible witness to the gaiety, as she heartily wished herself, for any attention that was offered her. The girls, perfumed, powdered, laughing, pushed by her without a glance, and the boys, gathering eagerly about them, saw her as little. She went into the room where two maids were murmuring together between pyramids of cloaks and furs, but even these minced monosyllabic answers to her timid observations, and stared after her as if she had been a strange animal.

The aunt had gone to bed now, and the bridge table was completed by a relative of Mrs. Rose, a retired army officer who was quite deaf. At twenty minutes to one Ellen found herself watching the game; Mrs. Rose made no attempt to get her into the dancing now, the matron's face was flushed, and she seemed excited. She was playing with Mr. Josselyn, and it was evident that the luck was running against them.

"You don't bid them when you have them, Tommy!" the bride said lazily, scoring a fourth consecutive rubber for herself and partner. The old man only gave his wife an indulgent look. But Mrs. Rose said with some acerbity:

"There's no bidding hands like these! I declare I never *saw* anything like it!"

"I suppose we can't start another—we said we would stop at one," young Mrs. Josselyn smiled. Ellen saw Mrs. Rose give her a venomous look as the jewelled hands tumbled the cards idly, and the army man earnestly and quickly added the various scores.

"I owe you seventeen and Captain James nine," said Mrs. Rose. "Now come, everybody, and have something to eat. I'm starving."

"Nothing for me at this hour!" Mrs. Josselyn said lightly, "I shouldn't have a complexion or a figure for a week!" The inference was plain.

"And I'm going upstairs, now," Ellen put in shyly. "I am—a sort of a headache—I think I'd really better! And Mrs. Rose, will you tell me about trains tomorrow?—I think I had better—Aunt Elsie expects me——"

She had nerved herself for opposition, but Mrs. Rose made none.

"I'm sorry you can't stay," she said, fighting a deep yawn, "'Scuse me, everybody, but cards always make me so sleepy! They're all going over to Dorothy's tomorrow, I think. Better stay and have a little more good time. Auntie will forgive you! Anyway, come down and have some supper now!"

But Ellen murmured of her headache again. She would not face that hilarious supper room; or appear under her hostess's wing, as one unable to make her own way. She slipped upstairs.

And once in the safety of her own room, she began to undress automatically, with scarlet cheeks and a heaving breast. They had been rude to her, they had been rude to her! She had only wanted to be inno-

cently happy, she had only asked that they be reasonably kind, and they had turned her world upside down, and scarred the old happy confidence forever!

In Mrs. Rose's room, beyond the bathroom, a fire was burning, and Ellen went in to it, and sat down before the steady glow of the bed of coals. It was an old-fashioned steel-rodded grate, the furnishings of the entire room were old-fashioned. Mrs. Rose's ideals in furnishing had stopped short with the period of her first marriage, nothing to her would ever be so beautiful as solid brass beds and furniture of polished maple. A table loaded with handsome objects was pushed against the broad foot of the bed, and every chest and bureau and bookstand was filled with expensive things, boxes and frames and lamps and small statues and trays. These were all dusted by the maids every day and put carefully back in their places. The maids lifted the satin runners from the tables, and the rich lace strips that lay over the satin, and shook all the silk cushions on the big couches every day, too. To-night there were several enormous pots of flowers in the room, presents that had been sent Mrs. Rose for Thanksgiving: two poinsettias, a begonia, and a large fern. The cards from the senders still dangled among the foliage, and stiff ruffs of crêpe paper were pinned about the clay pots. In a day or two the plants would droop in the hot air, and then Maurice would be called in to carry them out, and fling them, cards, tissue-paper, and all, into the rubbish heap near the furnace.

Ellen, huddled in her wrapper, was dreaming over the coals, when the door was pushed open, and she turned with a smile, expecting to see her hostess.

But it was young Mrs. Josselyn who came in, wrapped in a splendid Oriental robe, and with her thick, soft brown hair hanging in a loose coil between her shoulders.

"I saw the door open," said she, dropping into the chair opposite Ellen. "I'm tired to death, but I don't feel like going to bed!"

She stretched her slippered feet to the blaze, locked her hands behind her head, and yawned, as unself-conscious as a cat. Ellen studied the lovely white arms, the smooth low forehead from which the hair was swept, the dropped bronze eye-lashes. She dared not open a conversation, and risk another snub.

"Danced yourself tired?" asked Mrs. Josselyn indifferently, after awhile.

"I didn't dance," Ellen answered, smiling as if the fact were entirely insignificant. But her tone was hurt in spite of herself. "I don't know them," she added, her voice thickening, "and this is my first visit here—we took a long trip to-day, too—I really didn't want to go—and I got tired——" She stopped short.

Mrs. Josselyn elevated her delicate eyebrows in entire comprehension, pursed her lips, and looked thoughtfully at the fire.

"What'd you go for, then?" she asked, presently.

"Well, I felt I had to!" Ellen answered lamely. The other woman took a framed picture from the table, studied it for a few minutes, and again moved her eyes slowly to Ellen.

"So you've been having a perfectly rotten time?"

Ellen laughed nervously.

"Why, no, I couldn't say that!"

"I suspected it, the way you hung around the card-

table," said young Mrs. Josselyn, frankly. She extended the picture she held to Ellen. "Know him?" she asked briefly.

Ellen shook her head. She looked at the face of a young man, thin, earnest of mouth and jaw, keen of eye. Even in the picture she could see that the thick crest of hair was gray, and even in the picture the handsome face showed character and power. At one corner, in a small square hand, was written: "To Lucia's Mother, from T. G. J., Jr."

"He's not spoken to his father since our marriage," Mrs. Josselyn said, dispassionately. "I've never met him. He's good looking——"

She stared silently for several moments at the face of her unknown step-son before replacing the silver frame upon the crowded table behind her. Ellen, whose sense of the romantic had been touched by this situation, looked at her with new interest. Mrs. Josselyn, again stretching her lithe body with luxurious pleasure, apparently dismissed the subject from her mind, for when she spoke again, it was of Ellen.

"So you've had a nasty time, and they treated you badly?" she said ruminatingly. "Well, that's your fault, my dear. I've been watching you——"

Her languid voice dropped, and she yawned.

"I believe I could sleep like a baby, now!" she said. Then suddenly glancing at Ellen, she added: "Girls are alike, you know, and you could have as good a time as any of them! But you mustn't try to play *their* game; they'll have you there. Make them play yours!"

"Easier said than done! "Ellen said, sensitive and girlish.

"Tell 'em you hate walks, and you think they're all silly. Tell 'em you won't dance until you feel like it—they'll fall for anything!" said the bride. "But you should have gotten on a horse this morning. You can ride."

"I know I can! But I don't know how you know it!" Ellen laughed, ashamed, interested, reassured and thrilled at once.

For answer the other woman rose, touched a piece of coal with her slipper, looked at one or two photographs on the mantel, wound her loose hair with a sudden gesture into a coil, and yawned so profoundly that she laid her arms on the mantel and her face on her arms during the operation.

"Oh, girls are all alike! I'm going to bed—good-night!" she said sleepily, and was gone.

CHAPTER III

THE morning came with glorious winter sunlight, and Ellen Latimer, turning luxuriously under her warm soft blankets, stared blankly at a clock that was rapidly moving toward nine o'clock. They must all have had breakfast by this time—evidently nobody cared whether she was alive or dead.

But the situation seemed rather interesting than tragic this morning. She got up, enjoying the unexpected warmth of the room, and went yawning into the bathroom, and turned on both faucets for a bath. Not that Ellen took a bath every morning, there was no bathroom in the old Latimer house, but she was as adaptable as most girls of her age.

While the bath was running, she peeped timidly into Mrs. Rose's room, and was pleasantly surprised to see that lady's large form, heaving in deep slumber, upon the bed. One person would be later than Ellen, at all events!

Ellen had had a white night, one of the few in her experience. For long hours she had lain awake, thinking soberly about the events of the past two days, and, quite unconsciously, assimilating their bitter lesson.

These girls were not better than she, not wiser, not really happier. But their circumstances were utterly different, and it was Ellen who was to blame, not they, for trying to bridge the gulf between their lives. She still had her good home, her own admiring and affec-

tionate group, her books to read by the fire, her garden to dream over in the spring, and the swimming and boating and tennis that absorbed all youthful Port Washington from June to October. She had Willa and Olive and the Henshaw boys and Bobby Carnival to take Sunday walks with, and, above all, she had her work at the League—and she was going to work in deadly earnest now. Lucia and Doris were not real, and Ellen's life dealt only with what was practical and sane. One might sigh for the prettiness, the gaiety, the irresponsibility, of Lucia's life, one's face might burn because this pretty butterfly could be so triumphantly rude, and so self-centred, but it was wiser to forget it all, or remembering, remember, too, that the dainty superfluities were a mere accident of income. Ellen Latimer would have something that Lucia Torrey might envy some day, and through no accident of birth.

Consoling herself with her first hard-won philosophy, Ellen fell asleep as a clock somewhere struck the third hour of the morning, and being young, she woke joyous and refreshed, and went down to breakfast with feet that felt more like dancing than they had felt at any time the night before.

The breakfast room was deserted. Ellen was the first of all the household to appear. She smiled over her carefully served courses, and presently was hanging absorbed over a jig-saw puzzle that had been scattered upon one of the library tables the day before. Her train went at half-past eleven, it was not yet ten o'clock.

As the young people straggled downstairs she looked up to nod at them composedly. And the youth called

"Red" came to the table, to busy himself with the fascinating confusion, lazily declining breakfast because "he and Miss Latimer were having such fun!" There was really some show of warmth in their invitation that she go with them to Dorothy's to-day, but Ellen saw her new-found path too clear, and resolutely shook her head. At eleven the smart little woolly coats and the scarfs and heavy laced boots were all in evidence again, and a group of horses trampling the snow at the side door.

"I think you're awfully smart to have done so much of that!" Lucia murmured lamely, in farewell, her eyes on the puzzle.

"I like it," Ellen said, her voice a little gruff.

"I'll give you a puzzle to take home with you!" Mrs. Rose called from the card-table, and when Ellen turned again Lucia was going out of the door, a whispering girl linked on either arm. She presently went quietly upstairs to pack, and pinned on the fur-trimmed hat, and fastened a little clump of fresh violets, from a vase, against the sober little suit. It was only good-byes now, and the whole experience was over!

"The limousine's coming 'round, dear," Mrs. Rose said, stacking a last trick, and rising somewhat heavily to accompany her guest to the door. They stepped out to the stone veranda that Ellen had crossed with such high hopes two days ago, and looked down upon a panorama of scattered homes and gardens powdered with the light snow and washed with brilliant sunshine; stone fences, brick fences, clean-swept driveways, everything shining and prosperous in a bath of Sunday peace.

"I'd like a ride myself this morning, but I haven't

been on a horse for years," said the hostess. "She hasn't played bridge much, but she seems to be a natural born player, and don't say one word about *luck!*" she added inconsequentially. Ellen began her thanks and good-byes.

"Don't say one word, dearie," said kindly Mrs. Rose, "I'm only sorry you have to go." Her eyes suddenly were fixed upon the gate, and Ellen, turning, too, saw a low-hung powerfully built roadster turn in, and come quickly up the drive. "Now who's that?" wondered the older woman, discontentedly eyeing the two furred men who occupied the car. "I never sit down to a game of—why, it's Ward! It's my husband and Gibbs Josselyn!" She turned agitatedly to Ellen. "For Heaven's sake, what shall I do?"

Ellen, aware of an emergency, had yet not at all grasped the situation when the two men came laughing up the steps, and greeted her hostess. Mrs. Rose dazedly kissed the small, gray-haired man who was her husband, and dazedly introduced Ellen.

"Ward, this is Nellie Buckley's girl you've heard me talk about, and Miss Latimer—Mr. Josselyn," she said.

Ellen gave her little gloved hand to Gibbs Josselyn. She would have recognized him instantly from the picture. Like his companion, he was smothered from neck to heels in a great fur coat, but he snatched off a heavy gauntlet before he took Ellen's hand. His head, bare in the sunshine, was silver, and the lean, clever face she remembered was clear olive in colouring, and brightened now with a most winning and kindly smile. Ellen's first rather awed impression was of poise, reserve, self-confidence. Authority spoke in the pleasant

voice, and every inch of the man was stamped to her young vision with a fineness, an aristocracy, a something that marked him superior to others.

In the midst of the first jumble of explanations from the newcomers, as to their reasons for leaving Great Barrington, and their first details of the trip, Mrs. Rose distressedly interrupted.

"Gibbs—Gibbs, my dear boy," stammered she, holding his hand in both her fat ones, and fixing upon him a look all imploring and conciliatory. "You know your father is here, dear—I wouldn't have had it happen for anything in the whole world—but he and Lillian got in on Wednesday, and he telephoned me at once to come down and lunch with them—I really do feel terribly about it——"

Gibbs Josselyn had flushed up to the silver crest, but he smiled upon her not unkindly.

"Dad's here, eh?"

"Yes, Gibbs—and—and Lillian!"

"Gosh, that is awkward!" ejaculated Ward Rose, with a sharp, anxious look at his guest.

"Not awkward a bit," Josselyn said quickly. "Of course you had to have them, I'm glad you did—but of course I won't meet her. I'll be getting right along, and see you soon——"

"Listen, Gibbs—she's really quite nice!" Mrs. Rose said eagerly. "Do—do be reasonable about it! Your father—your father isn't going to have any more children, Gibbs, and you simply——"

"Gibbs is the best judge of what he wants to do, my dear!" her husband interrupted nervously, with a hint of disapproval in his tone. "I wouldn't—I think I wouldn't try to force matters, Abby. We're awfully

sorry, my dear boy, but you understand—of course I had no idea——"

Mrs. Rose looked despair.

"But you've not had breakfast, Gibbs, Lucia will be wild if I let you go—coming eighty miles a morning like this——"

"But I can get breakfast!" he said impatiently, as if he found the situation insufferable.

Ellen had been a rather embarrassed witness to this scene, her sympathetic eyes going from one face to another. Now her hostess suddenly noticed her:

"My dear child—all this time—where's the limousine?" she exclaimed nervously. "Who was to telephone the garage? Why isn't it here? What time have you, Ward—Miss Latimer must catch the eleven-thirty!"

"She has exactly eleven minutes," Gibbs Josselyn said drily, glancing at his watch, and the older man added surprisedly: "What on earth's the matter with Maurice? Why is everything topsy-turvy, Abby?"

"Good-bye, both of you—see you soon!" Gibbs said suddenly. "Run down and jump into my car, Miss Latimer. I'll run you to the train. We'll make it very nicely. Good-bye, Ward! Good-bye!"

"Oh, now, I don't like this one bit!" Mrs. Rose continued to protest, but she kissed Ellen good-bye none the less, and her husband ran with the two young persons down the steps, tucked Ellen's bag into the back of the car, and forced her to slip into his big fur coat for the two-mile trip.

"Leave it in the office some day, Gibbs," he said. "You can make it, I guess! Good-bye, Miss——

Awfully sorry, old boy, but such things will occur. Abby's all upset about it, I know."

Young Josselyn put Ellen into the car, and tucked the heavy robe snugly about her. In another ten seconds he had sprung into his own seat, and waved a good-bye to the watching Roses. The roaring of the car drowned out all farewells. Ellen laughed excitedly and waved her hand. A glance at her companion's dark, unsmiling face, however, rather daunted her, and she sobered instantly and shrank down into her seat, staring gravely ahead.

A day or two ago Ellen might have felt it her place to keep the conversation moving. But the last forty-eight hours had been full of painful lessons for her; she knew better now than to attempt any friendly overtures. The men and women of this strange world did not like it. Boys younger than she had snubbed her, girls of seventeen had looked upon her askance. And now she was alone with a man whom even these superior girls and boys held in deep admiration and respect. So she kept absolutely silent, her bright eyes moving between the fur of her hat and the fur of her collar like those of a timid but interested bird.

The roadster ran along smoothly between snow-heaped hedges, past one stately gateway after another. The sun shone, and the wheels made a pleasant crunching sound. Ellen's small body was tipped into an attitude more like lying down than being seated, but she found it delightfully luxurious and comfortable.

Sometimes a closed car filled with well-dressed, church-going women turned them from the road, and twice they met riders, rosy-cheeked and laughing in the windless, clear cold morning. Smoke was pouring

up from wide chimneys straight to the cloudless sky, and the village, when they reached it, was full of chatting groups, on their way to church, or clearing the sidewalks with noisy shovels.

Ellen was more interested in these details than in her train, but as the car was brought neatly against the station platform, she began to free herself from her wrappings, and said politely:

"I'm a thousand times obliged to you, Mr. Josselyn!"

"I don't know whether you are or not," he said, narrowing his eyes at her quizzically. "I think we've missed it!"

"Missed it! Oh, goodness!" Ellen echoed in dismay.

"Stay where you are," he said, jumping from his seat. "I'll find out."

He crossed the station platform and disappeared, and Ellen sat in a panic, waiting for him. Oh, she couldn't go back to that house, and have the whole thing begin over again——

"Yes, ma'am, we've missed it," said Gibbs Josselyn, coming back, and leaning against the car with sympathetic eyes on her face. "Was it pretty important, or what? The next is at one-twenty-two."

"It's not so important," Ellen said, in a troubled voice. "But I don't like to go back—I'll wait here!"

"What—until after one o'clock!"

"Yes, I think so," Ellen answered firmly. "I—I don't know them very well," she went on confusedly. "And—and I think I rather worry Mrs. Rose, not getting on exactly with the others." She stopped, conscious that this explanation was rather lame, and added finally: "You see, they all know each other so well, and they don't know me!"

"I see perfectly," Gibbs said pleasantly. "You would be safer in a band of Hottentots!"

Ellen laughed. Her white night had only added a touch of mystery, of spirituality, to her Irish beauty, after all, and the drive, after her breakfast, had brought back her wild-rose colour. The man looked at her as if he saw her for the first time, looked down at his big fur glove, plunged his hand suddenly into it, and asked carelessly:

"You couldn't make the run with me, I suppose? I'm going straight down to my club. It won't take us more than a couple of hours."

The girl's blue eyes danced. The thought of a refusal never entered her head.

"Oh, I'd love it!" she answered happily.

"Good girl!" he said. He walked about his car, eyeing it from all sides, opened the engine-hood and made a few mysterious investigations, got back in his place, and they were off. The village and the chatting neighbours and the scraping shovels slipped behind them, and they were out between the stately fences and the snow-draped gardens again. Once her companion, who was now wearing dark goggles, turned to Ellen and dropped another pair of glasses in her lap, with the four brief words: "Better put them on." Ellen obediently snapped them against her soft hair. Not another word was spoken for three miles. Ellen was entirely conscious that the man beside her was gradually working off his irritation and anger.

After awhile he glanced at her, smiled a sudden and perfunctory smile, and said:

"I'm pleasant company for you—what? Have you

minded my chatter?" Ellen laughed, in some embarrassment.

"I didn't mind—not talking!" she said, shyly.

"You—what!" he asked in so loud a voice that she felt rather frightened. "You didn't mind? Well, that's so much gained, anyway." He drove on for a minute or two, and then asked abruptly: "Lorimer, is it?"

She looked puzzled, smiled, reddened, suddenly caught his meaning, and answered hastily:

"Latimer!"

"Latimer—I beg your pardon! Well, Miss Latimer, how much of that did you get?"

Again Ellen was not quite sure she understood him.

"You mean—there at the house?" she faltered, as he gave her a shrewd side glance.

"Exactly!"

"I knew that Mr.—— that your father was there!" the girl said, timidly.

Gibbs wrenched at the wheel with large, strong hands; his brow clouded; they flew along in silence.

"Damn such women!" she heard him say under his breath. Ellen felt her colour rise, she looked straight ahead. "I wonder if she arranged that!" Gibbs presently said, in a suspicious and musing tone, as the car coasted noiselessly down a grade, and they and the white world were wrapped in a momentary silence.

Ellen's quick look met his; she shook her head decidedly.

"Mrs. Rose? Oh, no! She wouldn't do a thing like that! She was frightfully nervous the instant she saw you," she answered confidently. "She's too good-hearted—she wouldn't do a thing like that!"

Again he did not answer, except for a dubious glance and a half-satisfied nod. But after a while he spoke.

"I guess you're right. You probably are. I guess I'm just out of sorts—making too much of the whole thing!" The car slowed down, Gibbs looked at the fastening on one of his big gloves, shot Ellen a glance.

"Have you got a mother?"

"No," Ellen answered. "My mother is dead."

"So is mine," he said soberly. "I loved her very much. I don't—I don't get used to it!"

"I'm sorry!" the girl said, simply, after a moment.

"That crowd," Gibbs said darkly, "can make light of it, if they like! The King is dead—long live the King. Well, I'm not that sort. I'm done with the whole crowd of them!"

"It was awkward," Ellen said thoughtfully. "But I don't think it was any one's fault."

"Perhaps you're right!" he conceded, again. And again for a few minutes he was silent. Then he suddenly began to speak of his mother.

"I don't know why," he said unexpectedly, "but I wish you had known my mother. She was a most extraordinary person. She was frail always, I think, and when I was a boy about eighteen or nineteen, she had an illness, and she never left her couch after that—for twelve years. I was studying in Paris, she and my father had left me there; she wanted me to be a painter. But on my own responsibility I came home when my father wrote me that she was ill. I've never forgotten her look when I came into the garden. It was summer, and she was lying on the porch—thin, and so white——"

Ellen hardly dared breathe. She had never had a man's confidence before. "I gave up my painting, and I

went into the firm with my father," he pursued. "It was all made mighty easy for me, of course. I had my riding horse, and my country club, I'm not representing myself as a martyr. When he had to go to London, I stayed with her, and when Dad came back they sent me around the world with another chap—a wonderful trip, too. A year ago, we were both in the library with her, when she—well, she just gave a sort of sigh, that was all. Her heart got tired, there was no pain. And for awhile we thought my father was going, too. He drooped and brooded—it was ghastly. He'd always been so young for his age. But now he seemed broken, somehow!"

Ellen cast about for something to say, fearful of chilling his mood.

"He seems young now," she ventured at last.

"Now? Of course he does!" Gibbs assented half-angrily. "Mind you," he added, speaking fast and vigorously, "Mind you, he had a perfect right to remarry if he felt like it. That's his affair. But to marry this pink-cheeked, empty-headed, stupid cloak model—if she *was* that! I only saw her once. She was engaged, when my father met her, to a big black-moustached fellow who had a couple of living wives. That's *her* measure! The fellows began to hint to me about it six months ago; I didn't believe it. Then I saw my father with her one night, having dinner; at Sherry's, I think it was. I thought——" He glanced at his companion suddenly. "Well, you're only a kid," he said, more gently. "But I never dreamed this would come of it!"

Ellen's colour rose.

"But—but there is nothing *disgraceful* in his marry-

ing her," she said bravely. "And—and if I were your mother I would rather he did that than—than did anything that wasn't fair to her!"

Gibbs drove on in silence. She thought perhaps he had not been listening.

"You're quite right, my dear," he said presently, in a softened tone. "You make me feel ashamed of myself. A good woman has the trick of putting her finger right on the vital spot sometimes, and I believe my mother would agree with you!"

Ellen's happy colour flooded her sensitive face.

"I've not seen my father since this thing happened, two months ago. I suppose they told you that?" Gibbs said. "I've not been home since. I suppose he's established her there, if they got in on Wednesday, and she's prowling among my mother's books and laces and jewellery. I can't—I can't quite go it. The world's big enough, and people will stop buzzing about us presently. Let her have her money and position and good times, I don't grudge them, God knows. But I feel as if it wasn't only my mother who died a year ago, but my father, too, and the old days, and the old way of thinking. Some day—I don't know—I'll go in and see the old man, and we'll have a talk——"

"But you've not met her?" Ellen asked thoughtfully, when his voice had dropped to silence. "She doesn't seem to me the cloak-model type."

"Pretty, eh?" he asked, with dry interest.

"Oh, extremely! She's more than pretty, she really has a lovely face, and I think she is clever, too. She's studying French and music, and she—well, she has a way of keeping silent that makes other women seem like chatter-boxes!"

"Paris gowns, I suppose, and tiaras to breakfast?"

"Well, too many jewels, I should think. But her clothes are really exquisite; she had on some sort of awfully plain peacock blue thing this morning, not a bit of trimming, not even a belt—it was just wrapped about her like a robe—all the girls were watching it out of the corners of their eyes! And Mrs. Rose said she happened to have ordered one just like it, only in green!" Ellen said innocently.

Gibbs laughed shortly.

"That's Abby for you! She'll have it, too, the next time Mrs. Josselyn visits her. Go on, tell me about them. Why were the girls watching out of the corners of their eyes?"

"Well, I don't think they wanted your—your father's wife to think she could show them anything they didn't know!"

"Exactly. It must be lots of fun to play her game," Gibbs said musingly. "Watching every chance, studying the Social Register as if it were her catechism, picking up bridge and French and music! I wonder if my father sees through it?"

"It wouldn't be worth while to me, not if I was left a million dollars," Ellen contributed, "There's too much that's uncomfortable about it. And if I had daughters, I wouldn't want them to think that only money counted. I don't mean that I could do it, even if I did want to!" she said hastily.

"Do what?" Gibbs asked kindly, his interested eyes on her face.

"Oh, dress as they do, and go to a fashionable school, and keep up that sort of rushing about and talking——" Ellen answered, a little uncertainly.

"There's nothing in it for the people who chase it all their lives," Gibbs observed. "And the real people—the ones who are born to it, don't know they have it—so there you are! You can't buy anything real with money, as I see you suspect. Well, now I've talked you to death about me, and told you my maiden name and everything, and it's your turn. You didn't drop out of the sky, I suppose, just to give mean excuse to blow off steam? You live in——?"

"Port Washington, Long Island. Age, twenty-two," Ellen said demurely. She told him about her grandfather, and Joe, and her work at the Art League. It pleased her to be able to paint Mrs. Rose in the colours of a generous benefactress, to show him what a difference the friendship of the kindly old meddler had made in her life. She said that she lived in an old-fashioned village house, and that Aunt Elsie was considered the best housekeeper in the village, and that her tomatoes and Ellen's dahlias had twice taken prizes at the Mineola Fair.

"You sound quaint," said Gibbs, "and as if you might have a melodeon in the parlour."

"We have!" Ellen said, dimpling and widening her eyes as she smiled at him.

"Well, nice little country girls should not use rouge in excess," Gibbs rebuked her. "Look at yourself in that mirrorscope, and rub some of it off at once!"

The girl laughed delightedly, and leaned forward to see the vision of a miniature Ellen royally furred, with black hair loosened about crimson cheeks and happy eyes.

After that they ran on for awhile in contented silence, and then Ellen suddenly said, from the depth of a thoughtful mood:

"And now will you be an architect in business for yourself?"

"I don't know," Gibbs answered with a quick, amused glance at her. "I've been drifting. I may go abroad, and go back to the old work. I've had a hankering for it at various times during these years. My mother's little estate comes to me in a few months. That would keep me going until I struck my vein."

"You could take it all, and go to Paris." Ellen, who had about seven hundred dollars in mind, said enthusiastically. "I would if I could! I don't mean that I want the Bohemian part," she went on eagerly, "but I want to get among people who are poor, and working like mad, and not just in it for the fun! I've thought sometimes that I'd go to some woman there, and ask her to let me live in her family, you know, cooking and washing dishes, and let me off for my classes! Surely that'd be perfectly safe, wouldn't it?"

"Why, yes—if more girls had that idea there'd be considerably less suffering and sin in Paris this moment," Gibbs said, for some reason rather touched by the humble little dream. "But you see they want to enjoy life, and they spend their money, and then there comes a cold winter, and not too much fire and food, and somebody willing to play the friend—and then trouble! It's too bad—your heart is aching for someone or other all the time you're there!"

And having said this in a fatherly tone, he stopped the car at one side of the road, and took off his glasses. Ellen took her own off, too, and looked at him in some surprise, as they blinked at each other in the strong light.

"We are now forty miles from Columbus Circle,

and it is one o'clock," said Gibbs. "How do you feel about luncheon? A place called 'Adrian's' is about three miles from here, and I am a frail young thing, and I've not had any breakfast!"

Ellen was not Aunt Elsie's niece for nothing. She showed immediate consternation.

"No breakfast! Oh, why didn't you say so!"

"Then you'll join me in a large steak, several pounds of fried potatoes, and some coffee?" Gibbs asked, in satisfaction.

The conventional aspect of the affair struck Ellen for the first time. She looked at him gravely, and her ready colour crept up. She did not know him, her chaperone was even unaware that she was in his care. Men loved to get foolish girls into strange places, Aunt Elsie said, and a girl never made a mistake in refusing when she was in doubt. If Ellen didn't get back to New York to-night Aunt Elsie would think her with Mrs. Rose, and Mrs. Rose would think her safely home.

Gibbs was smiling at her obvious hesitation.

"You know you're safe with me, Kiddie, don't you?" he asked. "You know I wouldn't take you anywhere that I wouldn't take my mother?"

That settled it. Ellen had not been born yesterday, after all. She had her own stern girlish standard of judgment, and she knew she was safe. The luncheon was a perfectly natural part of the trip; they were both hungry. And he had not had any breakfast!

She made him an answer that pleased him deeply, although he apparently conceded it nothing but a satisfied nod, and immediately hid his eyes under the glasses again.

"If you say it's all right, I know it must be."

So they went to "Adrian's," a big, shabby hostelry set upon a rise of ground, and provided with wide verandas for the summer crowds; verandas deserted now under their bare awning frames.

Inside was great warmth, and the odour of cigars and food. Ellen found the rush of hot air delicious. She was cramped and chilly and sleepy, and surprisingly hungry. Gibbs put her in the care of a cheerful little Irish maid whose presence there was in itself reassuring to Ellen, and when she had washed her face, and brushed her hair, and readjusted her hat, she came out in great spirits to find Gibbs waiting for her at a small table in a corner of the sun-flooded dining room.

Other starved motorists were eating, and Ellen and Gibbs childishly hoped that every tray, borne slanting by a staggering waiter through the swinging kitchen door, might prove to be their own. They rapturously praised the bread and butter.

The meal came at last, hot and odorous and appetizing, and they talked while they ate. Gibbs told her of his first acquaintance with Mrs. Rose.

"I was a small kid of ten or twelve, in Rome, do you see? And she was there with her first husband, Torrey, who was a good deal older than she—a man of fifty-five or sixty, I should say. He had struck it rich in the West somewhere, and she wasn't the woman to settle down in Nevada City. Arthur was a baby then; Lucia was born later. My mother was kind to her, we were at the same hotel, and she was awfully kind to me. She had a brother with her, about my age, and we saw a good deal of each other. Later, when she was a widow, she turned up in Paris with the two children. My mother and father were staying there for a while,

before leaving me there to study. And later, she came here, and married Rose, who is a darn nice fellow, and now of course she regards me as a member of her family! And I'm fond of her, too, although Lucia's a little fool, and I can't stand Arthur."

"She went to school in Boston with my mother," Ellen said. "But I never saw her until a few years ago. Now that I've visited her I can see just the careless way she suddenly thought of inviting me to her Thanksgiving house party. She thinks all young people ought to like each other and dance and have a good time, and I suppose she felt sorry for me. But I never had such a wretched, uncomfortable time in my life; perhaps it was my own fault!"

She told him all about it, inconsequentially, and he listened with genuine interest in his handsome eyes. Perhaps this artless revelation of a girl's heart was novel to a man who found the sex remarkable in all its phases, perhaps with beauty like Ellen's opposite him, and a delicious breakfast under way at last, he would have found anything she said equally absorbing.

"Little cads and snobs," he said, when she had finished. "And some of them will never be anything else. If Lucia marries well, and starts off with a limousine and three or four servants, and a big wedding, she'll never know that she really is a rather ignorant and undeveloped girl, whose money has proved about the worst thing that could have come to her! Well—how do you feel now? Anything more?" He summoned the waiter; the check was paid. It seemed quite natural to Ellen that he should put a piece of silver into her hand: "For the girl, when you get your coat."

Warmed and contented, they went out to the car again, and again Ellen was wrapped in snugly, and disguised by the big dark glasses.

"Half-past two," said Gibbs, again at the wheel. "That means that we will run into the city just about four o'clock."

"It's going to snow," said Captain Latimer's granddaughter with certainty. Her companion gave a quick, suspicious look at the sky.

"I believe you're right, Miss Fatima Latimer. But we'll beat it to New York just the same. Let us away!"

The car moved smoothly away over the snow. Ellen was beginning to love the steady, gliding motion. She secretly wished that there was a longer journey ahead. But when the disquieting thought leaped into her mind that he might offer to drive her all the way down to Port Washington, she most inconsistently began to pray that it would not occur to him to do so. Aunt Elsie's big Sunday dinner would be over, the house would reek of Grandpa's old pipe. There would be only cold food in the house for supper, and Aunt Elsie might not be gracious. No, if he said anything about it, she must dissuade him at all costs. But perhaps he would mercifully be unaware that it was only seventeen miles from the Williamsburg Bridge to the Port Washington Post Office.

The snow was surely coming; dark little cottony clouds were gathering ahead, and pressing low over the silent earth. There was no sunshine now, and the air seemed heavier and colder. The roads were almost deserted.

"Never you mind, we'll beat it!" Gibbs said

with great enjoyment. "Look out for a signpost, and tell me where we are."

"Columbus Circle twelve miles," Ellen announced, after a few minutes.

"Twelve miles—well, we must look out for the Sunday speed cops now!" He slackened his pace. They were running through a well-settled region. Ellen began to realize that the trip was almost over. She might get the train at four-twenty, otherwise she could easily catch the five-twenty, and get home just in time for the late supper. The day had run away; a day always to be a wonderful and treasured memory.

Afterward, she tried to remember just how she was shaken from her musings. Like all accidents, the thing was simplicity itself. They were running parallel to a trolley track, on the wide street under the beginning of the elevated trains. There was a car on the track a few hundred feet ahead, and next to the car a man driving an enormous team of horses and an empty truck. Both truck and trolley were travelling in the same direction as the automobile.

The street was so wide that there was no question, even in Ellen's mind, of the propriety of passing the car and truck, especially as the stretch of street beyond was absolutely empty. Gibbs turned his wheel toward the left, and was running unconcernedly by, when the motorman suddenly sounded an ear-piercing whistle—a terrific, prolonged blast of the siren with which trolley cars are sometimes equipped in the country. The horses, with a wild plunge of terror, flung themselves straight across the path of the motor-car coming up behind them, almost unseating their driver, and tangling themselves in reins and harness.

Gibbs jerked his car violently to the left, instinctively avoiding the plunging hoofs; there was a moment of horrible skidding and grinding in the snow that edged the ditch, then the roadster turned abruptly on her side, and Ellen was spilled out, with Gibbs on top of her.

The girl had hardly time for a moment of hideous apprehension and panic before she was on her feet again, with his arm about her, laughing with the revulsion and the shock. The skid had saved them, for the car was turned at an exact angle, and so had slipped with her lights firmly wedged against the further side of the ditch, and had no opportunity to turn turtle, as she must otherwise have done.

For a few confused moments Ellen hid her dazed face in the fur of the man's shoulder; no, she really wasn't hurt, she had landed on her shoulder, honestly she was not hurt, it just hurt her for a moment, that was all! And it had scared her——

Gibbs, reassured, began to nurse a wrenched wrist of his own, and to discuss the accident with the two carmen and the truck-driver with the usual anger and threats. What was the sense of blowing a whistle right into the horses' ears——

"You was passing too close to the edge of the road, anyway!" shouted the motorman furiously. Upon Gibbs taking his number, he blew his whistle again, and banged triumphantly down the line. The truck-driver, a little frightened, standing at the horses' heads, expressed his satisfaction that the lady wasn't hurt, and drove away. A policeman, coming up with a few interested stragglers, was noncommital.

"You's driving pretty fast," he said calmly, to Ellen's

indignation. "You mustn't take chances with them heavy cars. You might easy have been killed, both you and your wife. You don't want to do that, you know."

"You've bust your front spring, Mister," volunteered a youth gaily.

"I know I have," Gibbs said savagely. "You poor little thing," he added tenderly to Ellen. "I've scared you to death!"

"Oh, it feels all right, now," she said quickly, but she was white, and still shaken from the narrow escape. He read her expression truly.

With only one worried glance at her, he set about extricating them from the difficult position as rapidly as possible. The gay boy was left in charge of the car, and Gibbs caught up Ellen's suitcase, as, still in their heavy coats, they started on foot to the nearest garage.

Fortunately this was not far away, and from here Gibbs sent mechanics back to the roadster, and engaged a taxi cab to take Ellen and himself as far as the subway at Van Cortlandt Park. The girl protested against his accompanying her all the way, she was quite able to take care of herself now, but he would not listen to her, and when they reached the city, finding that they had forty minutes to spare before the train at twenty minutes past six, he took her to the Vanderbilt tea room, and ordered tea.

All the while he was praising her, not only in words, but with his appreciative eyes, and in the sudden cheerfulness that the averted tragedy inspired in him. He talked to her frankly and gaily; she was a good sport, she had really shown incredible nerve. And they had had a great day, hadn't they?—since they missed the train from Hastings.

"I had to put the car up anyway," he reassured her. "I never use it much in winter, and, as I told you, as soon as my mother's estate is all settled up, I may go abroad."

"And your wrist?" Ellen asked, her radiance returning with the hot tea and the felicitous hour.

"That—I don't know which one it is! No, we're out of it all very nicely, Miss Purple Eyes."

"Purple Eyes mean trouble," Ellen said, smiling.

"Oh, you know that story? I didn't think your generation did. Well, I hope this day hasn't meant all trouble to you."

Ellen looked down at her plate. He could see the betraying crimson creep under her wild rose pink-and-whiteness.

"It's been a—wonderful day!" she said, hardly above a whisper.

Perhaps the man's first impulse was to lay his hand over the small hand that lay on the table not far from his own, and say something that should meet her mood. It was not the only time that Gibbs Josselyn had had such an opportunity, it was the first move in a game that he had played with supreme success for many years.

But he did not want to play that game with Ellen. There was no conscious, idle flirtatiousness in those lowered blue eyes, no coquetry in that honest little Irish mouth. It could bring her no joy, it might—it must bring her pain—to know Gibbs Josselyn well. No, let her have this day's adventures to keep, an unclouded memory, and let the story end here. She had played her part fairly, and he would play his, too.

So he let the moment pass, and presently a taxi was

had, and a large bunch of violets; there was barely time at the train for laughing good-byes. Ellen glanced back when she had passed the gate: he was watching her, and as their eyes met he gave her his disturbing smile again, and again raised his hat.

"He's thirty—or more, and every woman he knows is in love with him," said Ellen to herself, settling down in the train. "It's been wonderful—it's been heavenly, and I'll never see him again!"

CHAPTER IV

Aunt Elsie and Joe and even the old Captain listened to Ellen's tired and excited recital that night; the woman exclaiming over descriptions of meals and clothes, the old man and the young anxious to grasp exactly what happened to the car. Aunt Elsie hoped that Ellen had thanked that young man for bringing her down in his car, and Ellen sat up after the others had gone to bed and wrote a pretty note of thanks to Mrs. Rose. She said that she and Mr. Josselyn had had a "spill in the snow," but that fortunately no harm was done; it had been a lovely run.

After the letter was gone she sat reflecting; could she with any propriety write Gibbs? She knew she could not. She knew that he would read her motive in doing so as clearly as if she wrote the words: "I like you. I'm not married, and you're not married. I don't want to let you go."

She gave up the idea, and put her letter to Mrs. Rose by the clock, to be mailed in the morning, and went to bed, twisting and turning because the wrenched shoulder had begun to ache, but finally falling into deep, exhausted sleep between the cold sheets, too tired to dream.

Joe mailed the letter the next morning, and stopped at the drugstore on the way back, for Ellen could not twist her sore shoulder into her dress, and came downstairs in her wrapper. After breakfast, in the coffee-

scented dining room, Aunt Elsie investigated the shoulder with kind, hard fingers, and Ellen winced and moaned. Joe came back with the liniment, and the shoulder was rubbed, and Ellen lay on the hard little settee all morning, trying to prop pillows under her aching neck.

Her aunt and the Captain prophesied that it would get better immediately, and a day or two went by. Ellen lay patiently through the long day-time hours, and wept with pain in the night. A night came when Mrs. Baldwin, looming fantastic in the shadow of a kerosene lamp against Ellen's wall, threatened in a worried tone to call the doctor in the morning.

By this time the girl was in such agony that she only wanted to wail because the doctor could not be called then, on the instant, in all the lonely cold and terror of the night. But a doctor was an unusual thing in the Latimer house and her aunt went slowly back to bed hoping that she would "get some sleep."

Morning came, and Ellen's one fear was that her aunt would forget. She brushed her hair with her left hand, and washed her face with icy water, and went downstairs in her wrapper again. Seven o'clock. The doctor could not possibly come until nine.

Mrs. Baldwin did not forget. She persisted that it was either a cold in the shoulder, or a "wranch," or "the stiffneck." But she sent Joe for the doctor after breakfast, and Ellen felt better when she knew Joe had gone. Her aunt aired the dining room, anticipating the call, and had everything in order long before nine. But it was almost noon when the busy doctor came in, and sat down by Ellen's side with a smile of kindness and reassurance.

That was the beginning. Ellen, who had never been in a doctor's hands before, smiled up at him uncomfortably as his skilled fingers pressed and explored. She made a rueful face when she heard her fate. She must lie absolutely still for an unspecified number of days, perhaps a week. Mrs. Bradley afterward told some intimates that she mistrusted Ellen was in for a bad spell when Doctor Older, who was fresh from the city hospital himself, said that he was going to see an old doctor in the city who was a spine authority in a day or two and discuss Ellen's case with him.

The preliminaries of a long illness are almost always wretched for the patient. Before the rebellious soul and body will accept the situation, before the household has adjusted itself to the altered needs and the altered hours, before the physician himself has judged his patient's capacity for endurance, the responsiveness to remedy and opiate, hours of misery must be borne.

Ellen was suffering acutely, she was mystified and shocked, and she was heartsick at the hideous possibility she suspected under the young doctor's frankly troubled manner. Her bedroom was cold, she slept badly, and she was lonely. All the books in the house she had read a dozen times; there was no member of the family to whom it occurred that Ellen might be hungry for books; it did not indeed occur to her. Joe came in to see her for a few minutes twice a day, her grandfather once, her aunt kept the room clean, and brought her trays she could hardly touch. Fevered, restless, dazed with lack of sleep and with the effect of the medicine that controlled the worst of the pain, she would stare at them dully.

"What say, dear?" her aunt, flushed from the kitchen, would bend over her to ask kindly.

"If you'd just straighten up these covers, Auntie, it hurts my neck so to move ——"

"Ain't you going to eat no more than that, Ellen?"

"Oh, no, thank you! The custard was delicious; that was enough!"

Gradually she reached the second stage, and, if hope died within her then, as to the future, at least she found the present more bearable. Not as a whole, for her soul shrank from the horror of the thought that she might never walk free and young through the garden, and into Main Street again.

But she grew to enjoy the little pleasures of the day. There was a tiny white pill at night that sent her off into dull, delicious sleep, there was a kerosene stove that warmed the icy bedroom; her gratitude for a water bag, to be brought her gloriously hot three or four times a day, was out of all proportion to its cost. The doctor suggested most of these things, and Aunt Elsie delighted in capably adding them to her domestic system.

Aunt Elsie brushed and braided the cloud of soft hair that had hung about Ellen's hot face for the first few days, and began to take a certain pride in her invalid. And Ellen's girl friends began to come sympathetically in, and presently there were so many books to read that Ellen used to find herself wondering when she would have time for them. Her trays had a different soup and jelly for every day in the week.

A few days before Christmas the New York specialist came down, and was friendly and informal to a degree that enchanted Aunt Elsie. He could say little

more than Doctor Older. Miss Latimer had done something mysteriously harmful to one of the delicate vertebrae at the very base of the brain. It was an unusual case; he asked Ellen how she would like to see her bones described in a journal of medicine.

The girl quivered into the invalid's invariable question.

"Doctor—do you think—can you give us any idea—it can be cured, can't it?"

"Almost anything can be cured. We had a curious case in the hospital last week. Did one of the boys tell you about that, Older? They brought a child in——"

He launched into a most diverting story. When it was told Ellen tried to bring him back to her own case.

"Doctor Older tells me that you want to be an artist," said the specialist for answer. "Now, there's nothing to prevent you from going right on with your work here. Get out your pencils, and don't bother your head about your back! You're not having so much pain, now——

"Not unless I move," Ellen faltered, feeling the tears of bitter disappointment press behind her eyes.

Doctor Older immediately began to discuss a sort of harness he was having made for the neck, and when the city man had highly approved this experiment, the two went away. Only Ellen knew the bitter desolation they left behind them; and the long hours in the night she lay sobbing over what in her dark hour she thought the death of hope.

But hope was born, and died again, a hundred agonizing times, in the days to come. The harness gave her blessed relief, although its ugly brownness,

pressing up against her white face, was a hurt to her girlish pride. And on Christmas Day, with Joe's help, the doctor moved her down to the dining room, where a wide couch had been placed for her.

After that she came downstairs every day, and Aunt Elsie and Joe helped her tenderly upstairs every night. And there were hours, whole days sometimes between the moods of revolt and resentment, when she found a new, odd flavour of joy in her life. She grew nearer Joe, in the long evenings when they laughed over their games—Parchesi, and Halma, and cribbage, the first tenderness any one had ever seen in Joe was awakened by his inarticulate pity for his pretty sister. Aunt Elsie, too, found that an unexpected sympathy existed between her and her niece. Ellen listened interestedly to her village gossip, to her speculations as to affairs local, and, having nothing else to do, Ellen exerted herself to amuse the village women who came in, and began to reach eagerly for the village babies, laughing in pure delight as she unwrapped the little soft bodies, and pressed her pale, warm cheeks to the rosy little unresponsive faces.

But it was the Captain who proved the real surprise of the illness. The old man was not talkative, nor had he ever been gracious in manner. But he liked company, and when he found that Ellen would smile for ten minutes over something he had found her in his old leather trunk, or picked up for her on the shore, he began to turn toward her for companionship. He liked to watch her play solitaire at night, advising her over his pipe, and sometimes when the hour she dreaded came, in the early winter darkness, and soul and body seemed at low ebb, when the last red sunlight dropped

abruptly from the framed picture of Franklin at the Court of France, and touched Aunt Elsie's sewing machine, and was gone, when a chill crept into the close, darkening room, and it was too early for the dinner stir, and the lamp, and when the little familiar thread of pain worked its weary way back to her tired head, he seemed to realize her utter need, and he would begin long tales of wreck and mutiny, stories that won Ellen to interest in spite of herself.

"Never mind, Ellin," said the kindly old voice one day. "Tide's bound to come back, ye know. And, as the sailors say, it's putty generally at low tide that ye find things wuth pickin' up!"

"That's poetry, Grandpa," the girl said, smiling with pleasure. "And it's true, too."

"Ye do get better, don't ye?" he asked, with a sharp look over his glasses.

"Oh, I think I do. I don't know when the doctor means to let me take this collar off, and while it's on of course I can't tell! But Saturday night, when I was having a bath, Auntie took it off for a few minutes, and I almost died until it was on again!"

Her grandfather was watching her closely, with bright, anxious old blue eyes.

"Never mind!" he said. "First thing ye know ye'll be jumping in and out of here again like a fiddler's elbow!" And he returned to his paper comforted, because Ellen laughed again.

Almost every hour something took her thoughts to Gibbs Josselyn and the adventurous day that had been her last day free from pain. At first it had seemed that he must know, that he had a right to know, what

the accident had cost her, and that his Miss Purple Eyes had come to know what trouble was, after all. She longed—ah, how she longed, for his splendid concern and sympathy. There were whole hours when she lay and dreamed of it, his shock, his horror, his visits, and his flowers.

Sometimes the wording of the letter she knew she would not write flitted through her mind. "Dear Mr. Josselyn—— I know you will be sorry—something that seems to puzzle the doctors—the pleasant land of counterpane——"

But she did not write. Pride kept her silent. She would not send him the three lines that must buy his friendship. If that was to come to her, it would come. She dared not beg for it.

And honest as she was to the core, Ellen knew that her motive in keeping silent was not quite unmixed. The note might bring him straight to her, it was true. But suppose he did not in the least realize that her life had been crushed and altered in the one brief moment of terror and shock they had laughed over and so quickly forgotten? Suppose he said to himself that he was sorry, and it was a pity and nothing more? Then she would lose not only the future, but the bright and precious memory of the past. He might be in France now, for all she knew. He might crumple the little letter and toss it aside wondering why girls were all alike, each one reaching out in her own way for a man's attention and admiration.

Again, he might respond to the little appeal with all the generous ardour that she knew was in him, waiting to be stirred. He might come straight down to the house in Main Street——

To find Aunt Elsie, opening the door, suspicious of his errand, and find the dining room overheated and unaired, and find Joe's boots oiled and drying by the air-tight stove, and adding their odour to the other odours——

And to find Ellen, his rosy companion of the furs and the laughter, a small white-faced thing under a patchwork quilt, with brown leather straps under her chin——

Reaching this point in her thoughts, Ellen would give a little shudder. Better that he should never know. Better that she had never crossed his path, or he hers. But for that memorable week-end she might be going to the Yacht Club dance with Willa, Bobby Carnival, and the Henshaws to-night, she might be in the Mardi Gras Kermess that was to convulse and enchant the village next week. And summer was coming, a summer without driving and tennis and swimming for Ellen!

She must lie still while the others boated and danced and played without her. She must be a witness now to what had seemed so commonplace a few months before, and seemed so sweet and full a life now. Willa's new evening gown, and the suspicion that Olive Carroll was really beginning to return Bobby Carnival's devotion, and the secret that Mary Pitcher, the wife of a year, had told Ellen in a winter twilight—what miracles of simple happiness all these were!

She must lie still, the old physical joy in living gone, and the old peace of mind gone, too. For Bobby and the Henshaws seemed changed now, and in the back of her heart and the back of her mind there lingered the disturbing vision that had displaced them: the memory of a cultivated voice; of deep kind eyes, and silver hair;

of clever, groomed hands. There lingered the hurting knowledge that certain doors were closed to Ellen Latimer, that certain lips spoke a language she could not understand, that there was a world, so near her own, where her mere youngness and goodness and willingness to learn could win her no place. Other keys were needed for those doors, and through no fault of her own, Ellen had not those keys.

Mrs. Rose had gone to Bermuda, and later, according to the news columns of a morning paper, would leave her daughter, whose pre-débutante year had been one of exceptional delights, in school, while she visited friends in California. The check for Ellen's expenses had arrived promptly during the first week of the year, however, and had been the cause of some serious debate in the Latimer house.

Ellen wished to send it back, with a note explaining the circumstances. The warm-hearted Mrs. Rose might show her sympathy in some decided way, might even mention Ellen's sad situation in some quarter through which it would reach Gibbs Josselyn.

But Mrs. Baldwin, quite unsuspicious of this vague thought in her niece's mind, suggested that the check simply be banked for the time when Ellen could use it. No use distressing her generous friend with a tale of misery for which she was indirectly responsible, and which she could not help. Ellen would be well, one of these days, and perhaps the money might be used for some special course, this midsummer, which would enable her to start in her regular work in the fall.

Ellen agreed to this somewhat reluctantly. The girl hungered for the romantic and dramatic; life thrust

her back resolutely into the commonplace, do what she might. But she was learning patience and self-control, coming to believe that what made for happiness and harmony here, in the old house, was her first concern.

During a cold wet week in March she realized that her aunt was worrying about something, and with the quick sensitiveness of the invalid, she felt the instant effect on her own spirits.

"Well, the truth is, money don't grow on trees," Mrs. Baldwin admitted, opening the stove to thrust in another wet stick of wood. "And several bills have come in, and your Grandpa was frettin' about them a little. I say that doctors are accustomed to waitin', and let 'em wait until summer, when his dividends come in. There's no sense in touching your capital unless you have to."

Ellen had never given money a serious thought before. She supposed that there was plenty, perhaps half-supposed that Aunt Elsie and Grandpa lived in this simple fashion because they preferred it.

"We could rent a couple of rooms all summer, and more than make it up that way!" pursued Mrs. Baldwin. "I've kept boarders before this. You see between the little Grandpa has put away, and poor Mr. Baldwin's insurance, and having no rent to pay, we have about eighty or ninety dollars a month, Ellen, and dear knows that's enough! But now here's one bill for forty-two dollars, and that harness seventeen-fifty, and the city doctor's twenty for that one call, and the drugstore bill of course considerable—nine dollars and something, I think—and it kind of gets on Grandpa's mind!"

Ellen fought a wave of bitter heartsickness and rebellion. Oh, it was too much—it was too much! To endure and endure, to be silent, to be brave, and yet to be a burden on these loyal hearts, powerless to raise one hand to help them! She had a swift thought of Lucia, of the beautiful Doris——

"I'm so sorry, Auntie," she said, after a silence. "But if you did take boarders, I believe I could really help. I could shell peas and peel apples and do all the mending, anyway——"

Mrs. Baldwin, who had been standing at the window, with her arms rolled in her apron, and her eyes fixed upon the steadily falling rain, turned suddenly about, and for almost the first time in her life Ellen saw tears in the faded blue eyes.

"I declare, Ellen," said the older woman, trying to laugh. "You beat everything! I wouldn't have any more trouble laid on your poor little shoulders for all the money in Christiandom— 'Tisn't really the money that's got on Grandpa's mind, it's seeing you lay there, you poor scrap! And you do melt me all up, rememberin' your way when you was well and strong, talkin' meekly about shellin' peas and darnin' socks! If we could see you startin' off for town pretty and happy like you used to be, I guess Pa and I could make out well enough somehow!"

With which Mrs. Baldwin whisked out of the room, to tell Minnie Rodney, presently, when Minnie came in to tell her all about Al's baby, that she never had seen a character soften like Ellen Latimer's had softened the last few months.

Left alone, Ellen put her thin hand over her eyes for a few minutes, and cried quietly. Presently she

groped under her pillow for her handkerchief, and wiped her eyes, and said an earnest little prayer. And after that, hearing Minnie's voice, she called out cheerfully to hear about the baby, and Minnie and her Aunt came gladly in to tell her.

The prayer was answered, as such prayers always are. Three weeks later, in the last heavy snow of the year, a letter with a California postmark came to Ellen, and she called her aunt to share the new plan.

"It's from Mrs. Rose, in answer to one I wrote her last month. They're just starting for Honolulu, and she writes so sweetly about my accident and all. And she says that of course I'm to use that money for anything in the world that will make things easier, so you tell Grandpa to-night that I won't have a happy minute until he's paid all my miserable bills with it! And she says that if they go to Japan, she's going to send me the prettiest kimono she can find!"

CHAPTER V

April was rainy, and May was rainy, but the miracle of the year went on despite the rain. Between warm showers, Ellen, at the window, could hear the peepers shrilling in Baxter's woods, and the sweet rush of the freed waters in the creek. Then came the children's eager voices as they hunted for violets, and the lingering of the light on an occasional sunlighted afternoon almost until the supper hour. A film of green showed on the hard dark earth of the garden and against the bare limbs of the trees, and sweet wild winds swept over the world with the odour of damp turned soil and bursting buds in their wake.

Then suddenly there were still hot days, when banging screen doors and the distant crowing of cocks brought a foretaste of summer, the sky was high and blue, and the plum trees in the front yard looked like enormous popcorn balls. All the windows were open, and a scent of lilacs drifted through the house; a new fruit-store, sure sign of summer, opened in Main Street, and young voices began to echo again through the early evening darkness.

And Ellen, a little thin and limp, but dressed and radiant, had a comfortable chair under the lilac tree, and waved now and then at friendly passers-by in the street. She had a book, but often she sat dreaming blissfully, with the pages unturned, for hours at a time. No book was half so exciting as was a slow walk to the

gate, with a stop on the way back to gather herself a dozen violets, or a plume of lilac. Spring had never seemed half so lovely, or the world so kind.

"We ought to be content just to know it's coming back every year, Joe, with the flowers and the fruit blossoms!"

"But gosh, we aren't!" Joe made her laugh by answering seriously, one day.

"If I could have someone to love me, and a little place of my own to work in, and a garden like this, I know I wouldn't want any more, Joe!"

"You'll get married!" Joe said a little uneasily, smiling at her.

"Well, I didn't mean exactly that," Ellen answered thoughtfully. "I meant that I hope this winter had taught me not to care about the little things."

"Gosh—I'll *never* be happy!" Joe burst out bitterly. Ellen did not take the little tumble-headed brother in the sweater too seriously. Joe would read of an actor, and ache to be an actor; read of Panama, and yearn for linen clothes and tropical leisure; pore over pictures of cadets at West Point with envious eyes. Even the portrait of a President's young son, displayed in a Sunday pictorial supplement to the newspaper, would stir Joe to keen discomfort. "Look at the boob, with his hunting whip and his dogs," Joe would sneer, "he thinks he's something! Gee, somebody must like him, to pay someone for painting that!"

The glory of the year deepened swiftly, and joy kept pace with it in Ellen's heart. The harness was long gone, the couch was upstairs again, and only a cushioned rocking-chair in its place. Ellen could sweep the garden path again, with her blue sunbonnet over

her eyes. Ellen could cut out cookies on condition that she went straight upstairs and lay down for an hour afterward. Except that she usually went to bed at eight o'clock, and avoided the more violent forms of youthful amusement, Ellen might live her old life again.

But it would never be the old life. It was so enriched and so enhanced by the five long months in prison that Ellen felt sensations of freedom absolutely birdlike, warmth and flowers and blue sky intoxicated her. Leonard Henshaw, for whose attentions she had wistfully longed a year ago, was her captive now, but she did not want to marry Leonard Henshaw. She only wanted to be alive, and to claim her work and play among the living again.

May thirtieth, always a great day in Port Washington annals, broke cloudless, and found all the village already in holiday mood. Tides of human life, even as early as seven o'clock, began to turn toward the water, there were picnics, boating-parties, barbecues afoot; not a girl or boy in the village was without a golden plan for the day. Manhasset Bay, as blue and smooth as blue silk, under the high arch of the sky, was dotted with craft of every description: big steam yachts, and houseboats, two or three fleets of anchored smaller sailboats, and the usual busy traffic of rowboats, launches, canoes, and even crude rafts, working their ways like water bugs through the softly moving passage-ways.

To-day the yacht clubs would go into commission at high noon, with every imaginable form of gaiety to do honour to the occasion. At the Port Washington Club,

where Ellen and her friends would presently gather, there were to be swimming races, a great outdoor luncheon, a baseball game between the married and the unmarried men, moving pictures, games, and prizes for the small children, a dance until long after midnight, and, of course, the raising of the colours, and the yacht race that were the nucleus for the whole day's celebration.

Ellen was taken down by the Henshaw boys, in their car, at eleven o'clock, and was under parole not to race, even if she swam, not to "crew" even if she sailed, not to enter the tournament, even if she played tennis, and to be home at five o'clock to get three hours' rest before the dance. But long before Ellen was awake there were men on every one of the anchored yachts, whistling and shouting to each other as they groomed the brass work and the decks, and straightened rigging. Pails of dancing emerald water were hauled on board, and pails of dirty soapy water were flung back into the green deeps again; ropes banged against wood, and sails were shaken out in the first fresh breeze of the morning. Patient youths untangled long strings of flags on the pier; old Captain Latimer, in his glory, and Joe, gravely content to putter in the warming sunlight on the damp, heaving raft, were authorities here, and consulted alike by old mariners and by callow youths who petted their "Stars" as if they were fragile women.

By ten o'clock strings of colour were fluttering everywhere, women with baskets were gathering on the clubhouse porch, eager boats were cutting about the pier-end like restless gulls, and the silent Commodore, with a trimly uniformed figure and a trimmed, gristled beard,

was circulating among the hilarious men, women, and children with a smile of utter approval on his kindly old face. Tenders, loaded to their capacities, were making for the yachts now. Presently the colours went up, fluttering gayly against the blue, and the cannon, fired from the grassy mound before the clubhouse, was answered by twenty booming shots from the boats. As the detonation died away the band burst madly into sound, and thirty young figures plunged from the pier end for the first swim, to pull themselves upon the float a moment later as sleek as seals, and add their shrieks and laughter to the general uproar.

If Ellen Latimer, one of the seals, who was warning Bobby Carnival that if he pushed her into the water again he would be sorry for it the longest day of his life, had chanced to glance toward *The Eaglet*, one of the visiting yachts in the bay, anchored three hundred yards away from her, she might at this moment have received a shock. For a man with a thick mop of silvered hair under a visored yachting cap was standing there, yawning happily in the warm sunshine, looking with appreciative eyes at the bay and the shore in the soft hazy morning of what was to be a hot day, and in particular at the brilliant picture presented by the little club.

Gibbs Josselyn, if he had been through no such schooling as Ellen in the last few months, had suffered, too, in his own way. Like Ellen, he had seemed to lose his place in the world, with his father's marriage, his resignation from his father's firm, and the transplanting from his father's house to his club. Sensitive and proud, he found the attitude of his intimates equally distasteful, whether they sympathized with him or criti-

cized him, he missed his work, and found no incentive to take up anything new.

Beside the fire in his mother's drawing room, amusing the men and women she drew about her, he had been in an atmosphere infinitely stimulating to what was fine in him. He missed it, and in none of the homes where he was welcome did he find it again.

Without his realizing it, the pretty little Miss Latimer's rapture at the thought of Paris had touched him. She was not flirting, like Lucia, she was dead in earnest, the bright-eyed, rosy little enthusiast. Gibbs had more than once caught himself wishing that she might have the Paris, at twenty-three, that lay open to his hand, and found him lukewarm, ten years later.

He went to Maine, and modernized a seaside farmhouse for an old friend whose wife made love to him and thereby deeply annoyed him; he drifted into another friend's office, and earned his undying gratitude by designing some factory cottages, and superintending their erection at Newark, New Jersey. And then he chanced to come to Manhasset harbour with George Lathrop and George's motherless boy and girl in time for the opening of the clubs on Decoration Day.

George, Junior, presently leaping out of the cabin ready for swimming, the older men followed suit, and Gibbs, whom the boy adored blindly in all things, passed him in the fresh dancing water, and dragged himself up on the anchored raft at the side of the club pier, where they got into conversation with a boy in a dirty gray sweater, who was sitting there idly in the sun.

"This is going to be the girls' race now," said the boy, when he and George, Junior, had discussed sev-

eral important matters. "They'll all line up here, and dive, and swim to the float, and touch it, and then swim back."

"Well, we'd better get out of the way!" George, Senior, suggested. But the son begged eagerly: "Aw, Dad, let's stay and see the race. He says that after the girls, the boys race, and I wanter see it!"

"Sit up here under the pier, and keep out of their way, then!" Gibbs suggested. The boy with the sweater approved, saying: "We're all right over here!"

On the pier, the crowd was gathering to watch the races, and presently a dozen slender laughing girls in wet bathing-suits formed a line on the edge of the float, and at the crack of the pistol were into the water with one shout, and tearing like so many salmon for the swimmers' float. The sweatered boy was now heard to observe to George, Junior:

"That's my sister out there on the float. She could beat 'em all! She got first prize last year, and two years ago."

"She's very decent to keep out of it, then!" Gibbs said casually. "And if she's that one with all the dark hair, she's pretty."

"She fell out of an automobile, and hurt her spine, and they won't let her swim yet," said the boy.

"I don't know what she's doing in that rig, then," Gibbs observed.

"Oh, well, she swims, but she can't race!"

Gibbs thought the big, loosely-built country fellow had a most engaging smile, and paid small attention to his words at the moment. He questioned the boy about the other races, and promised George, Junior,

that he would watch the "Stars" get off at three o'clock. Meanwhile Ellen, wrapped in a mantle of drying black hair, was rocking herself back and forth on the float, discussing the races, and congratulating the winner. Perhaps she noticed the two strange men and the boy who dived suddenly from the anchor float, but as this chanced to be the moment when the Henshaw boys, with two girl passengers, elected to upset their canoe, it was probable that she saw nothing of the visitors.

Later, when she and Aunt Elsie were busy at the lunch-tables that had been built on the green between the clubhouse and the tennis-courts, and with a score of other women were cutting cakes, helping salad, and pouring coffee, Joe lounged up to them, gorging on sandwiches, interested in all other forms of food, and even willing to be useful in some not too conspicuous way.

"Take that mashed piece, Joe—that's about the best-looking chocolate cake I ever set knife to!" said his aunt. "Where you been all day, dear? Now you stay right here where I can lay my hand on you, and I'll send you down shipyardway with something for Grandpa, I don't s'pose we could drag him up here with a span of horse."

"There's a feller on one of the yachts that ast me to come out with a boat, about four o'clock, and bring him in to get cigarettes and ice and butter and things," Joe volunteered.

"You told him the stores were all closed until six?" Ellen asked quickly. Her brother looked blank.

"Gee—I am a fool——" he murmured penitently. "Gosh, now what can I do about that?"

"Go down and get into a canoe or something," Ellen advised, "and go out and tell him. He can get anything at six, they'll be open an hour then."

"I guess I'll do that," Joe said, and securing another triangular wedge of cake, and putting seven or eight moist, thin sandwiches in his pocket, he was gone. Ellen, who followed him down to the shore with some lunch for her grandfather, saw the little motor-boat he had informally borrowed churning out to the yacht, and sauntered back to the lunch-tables with him when he returned.

"That was awfully nice of you, Joe, I hope he appreciated it?"

"Sure he did. He said he was much obliged, and please to come at six, then. He asked me my name, and I said Latimer. I get sick of this 'Joe—Joe—Joe' business. Every wop in the place is named Joe! Gosh, that kid with them must have things pretty easy. His sister was there, a little kid—but Gosh, she was a pippin! Harriet! She's about ten or twelve with her hair all hanging round!"

Ellen laughed, and laughed again when Joe, returned to the lunch-table, began a fresh attack upon the food. For the young Latimers the episode seemed closed. And yet not only to Ellen, and to Gibbs Josselyn, but to Joe and the innocent Harriet of the hanging locks, the hour was filled with possibilities, and never to be stricken from the calendar of the four lives again.

For Gibbs had caught the name Joe called to George Lathrop, Senior, and had mused upon it.

"Latimer—that's funny. Latimer and Port Wash-

ington—he might be her cousin or something. I suppose the same names run through all grades in these old country places. If he comes at six, I'll ask him if he knows my little lady. I'd like to see that serious little girl again. What the deuce was her first name, did she tell me? What did Mrs. Rose call her?—Helen, that was it!"

"Is there any one down here named Helen Latimer?" he duly asked Joe, late in the sweet summer afternoon, when the races were over, and the wilted merrymakers had climbed home through the quiet, steep village streets, and the fast-sinking sun, over beyond Great Neck, was touching the flags with a last bath of splendid colour. Gibbs and Lathrop, Senior, were alone with the boy, for the children had elected to stay on the yacht. But Joe was clean and shaven now, his white shirt open to show the fine brown column of his neck, and his thick hair brushed and dampened into something like order. Joe had thought that the lovely Harriet might come with them, and was nursing a secret disappointment.

"No, sir. I guess my Grandfather and my sister and I are the only ones of that name," Joe answered, after a moment's thought.

"I believe I'll get an old place 'round here somewhere," George Lathrop said. "And keep the kids down here next summer. They could swim, and have some sort of a boat."

"Do 'em both a world of good," Gibbs said absently. "You never heard of a lady named Mrs. Rose—Mrs. Sewall Rose?" he presently asked Joe.

"Sure I did!" Joe said, smiling. "She's the lady that got my sister started in the art school!"

"Well, of course!" Gibbs was surprised at his own pleasure in identifying her at last. "Your sister, that's it! And what *is* her name?"

"Ellen," Joe smiled.

"Ellen, of course!" Gibbs echoed. "Well, how is she?"

"Oh, she's all right now," Joe answered carelessly. "If you're coming ashore for the dance to-night, you'll see her. She can't dance, except just a little, but she's going down."

"I hardly think we will come in for the dance," Gibbs answered. "Funny—she looks as if she could dance! But you give her my love—Mr. Josselyn, will you?"

"My boy is bursting to get in to that dance," Lathrop, Senior, smiled to Joe. "But we can't very well bring the boy and leave the girl alone——"

"I should think the little girl could look on for awhile," Joe said, suddenly hoarse.

At the dinner table, when the men had accomplished their marketing, and were back on the yacht, George Lathrop asked Gibbs if he had noticed that boy. That was no sort of boy to be knocking about the water-front of a small fishing village, he had an exceptionally fine face.

"I'd like to get hold of a boy like that, and keep him about the place," Lathrop said, enthusiastically. "It would be the making of George."

"Well, if you like the boy, I assure you you'd be amazed at the sister," Gibbs said. "She's a little beauty; dainty, clever, quick as a whip! I take it they're the best sort of American blood, come of a long line of simple, decent people——"

"What's the matter with her?" Lathrop asked.

"The *matter* with her—how d'you mean?" Gibbs, who was mixing a salad dressing, looked up sharply.

"Why, she's sickly, or something," his host answered innocently. "Didn't you hear the boy say this morning that she couldn't swim any more, and just now, didn't you hear him say that she couldn't dance? I suppose you have to have kids of your own to notice that sort of thing?"

"He said she'd been in a motor accident, and hurt her spine," little George said. "But she got the prize for swimming last year, and second prize in the ladies' singles——What is it, Uncle Gibbs?"

For Gibbs had laid down his fork and was staring at him strangely.

"Great Lord!" he said in a horrified undertone. "But that couldn't be!" And as they all looked at him in surprise, he turned toward his host. "You remember when my car was in a smash-up, last November, George?" he said. "It just occurred to me—it just occurred to me that that little girl was with me! I don't suppose there's one chance in a thousand that that was where she got hurt—I don't suppose there's one chance in a million——"

He got up and walked to the cabin window. The sunset gun had fired, the banners were lowered, Port Washington was dotted with lights in the early darkness, other lights mirrored themselves in the quiet bay.

"I guess you and I will have to go over and have a look at that dance, George," he said.

It was a night made for youth, and beauty, and the innocent, radiant egotism of beauty and youth. Ellen

knew, when the girls told her she looked perfectly adorable, that they spoke no more than the truth. To her happy eyes they all looked adorable, and she truthfully returned their compliments. Ellen was in palest pink, her gown, of silky, cloudy frailness, had cost forty cents a yard for eight yards, but as the girl had decided that it was to be "severe"—a word she often repeated with a sort of dimpling severity in her own manner—and trimmed with *nothing* but the wide, soft hems that finished its deep, soft ruffles, it had not proved a too expensive garment after all. And her slippers were pink, and her stockings pink, and as every other girl had miraculously achieved a similar harmony in colour, they looked like a flower garden in full bloom, and fully deserved all the praise that the escorting boys could not find time enough between bursts of laughter and gales of chatter to whisper to them.

The air was still soft and warm, and sweet with the odour of trampled fresh grass. About the club there lingered still the happiness of the long hot day. In the darkness water lapped gently at the pier, the sky was spattered thick with stars, and there were lights here and there along the Great Neck shore, and a long line of them, lying like a necklace down at Plum Beach. Even far off toward Hart Island and the Connecticut side of the Sound lights were discernible, and presently there would be a moon to shed an actual enchantment over the world.

Gibbs, his host, and both the children came ashore in the rowboat of *The Eaglet* at eight o'clock. Lathrop, Senior, had friends among the club members, and was quickly taken to the heart of Port Washington's younger set. He was a democratic man, and he liked

to see his daughter's blonde locks bobbing over the shoulder of the boy who had rowed the boat that afternoon. Gibbs had declined to enter the ballroom at once, and had remained on the porch to finish his cigarette.

From the darkness here he watched the dancers, and he had no difficulty in finding Ellen, in her pale pink ruffles, with her exquisite, radiant face. She was not dancing, although the blue eyes and the pink slippers evidently longed to dance, and when Gibbs first saw her, was talking prettily to some older woman with great gravity and attention. A youth came up and she transferred her earnest gaze to him, and presently Gibbs felt a quick sensation of almost pain near his heart as her face brightened into an actual laugh.

Another man was smoking quietly beside him, and after a while Gibbs asked him, just for the pleasure of hearing the answer, the name of the pretty girl in pink?

"That's Miss Ellen Latimer—her grandfather is one of our old Captains, here—quite a character," said the other man, in a slow, pleasant voice. "They're making a great fuss over the girl to-night; she hasn't been at a dance for six months! She gave herself a very ugly dislocation of the spine. I began to think she wasn't going to get over it. I happen to be her doctor——"

"That must have been an unusual case," Gibbs said, to lead him on. The other man was launched at once. His listener presently could form an idea of the little, inconvenient house, the suffering girl, the endurance, the patience, the cruel doubts and delays. He pleased the doctor with his warm congratulations upon the cure, and when the medical man had excused

himself, to go and dance with his wife, Gibbs stayed on at the window, watching the pink ruffles again.

So sweet, so young, so innocently fresh and good! Gibbs wondered whether summer and moonlight had gotten into his blood, as he felt it run warmer at the sight of her. Too dignified to write him what a day of pleasure had cost her, too honest to make capital out of the fortuitous chance, she could adjust her little affairs with courage and character, and, having chosen her path, pursue it to the end.

The man who won Ellen Latimer would be a lucky man, he thought, with a curious wistfulness. It was a wonderful thing to think that there were still in the world purity, and simplicity, and goodness, character, clean standards——

And suddenly, with an unaccustomed flush of colour in his face, the question sprang into his heart full formed. Suppose such a girl could come to care for a man like him? Where could he find anything better, or sweeter, or more rich in promise for the years to come? He was tired of the old life, he had never really cared for the false standards, the superficial women, the intriguing, shallow girls, the show and glitter and cost. To put his arm about that lovely young body, to feel her close to him as she raised her flower-like face for his kiss, to see Ellen in the sort of gowns he could design for her, crouched beside a studio fire—crossing an old garden in spring—— Nothing in months had so stirred his old delight in living as the thought of pleasing her, spoiling her, finding the untouched deeps of her joy always fresh. How she would love to shop with him, to read the books he loved, to meet the few old friends he really valued!

They would find some old farmhouse in this neighbourhood, and he would make it over with white paint and old draperies, and he might have his easel there—Ellen could paint, too—she had told him of her dreams——

Suddenly the plan was born. Paris! They would go to Paris, and there they could both work, and could make for themselves a life nothing short of the ideal. A dim old studio, one of those clever maids who delight in the cooking art, summers idling in Brittany or Holland. And the lovely young Mrs. Josselyn, a picture in gipsy hats and summer smocks, or velvet, childish winter gowns, would fill his life with sweetness, and inspiration, and everything that was clean and good and honest.

He had for her the awe that any man feels for an innocent girl. To Gibbs Josselyn it would have seemed unbelievable that she could imagine him essentially her superior. Older he was, and more experienced, but he balanced these things against her youth and beauty, and felt the exchange perhaps a little less than fair. Money, position, and power, the good things of life had been his since the hour of his birth, but he had had success and unsuccess in his work; sorrow, as well as joy; enemies no less than friends, and in this hour of real humility he felt himself a rather commonplace fellow, with only his hands and his mother's little fortune of a few thousand dollars to offer the woman he made his wife.

He crossed the porch to the door of the ballroom as the dance ended, and met her, in the group of girls and boys who were coming out for a breath of cooler air. She was talking to another girl, but she saw the

strange man, and turned her bright eyes curiously toward him. Then she stopped speaking, and one hand went with a quick gesture to her heart, and in the dimness he saw her white breast rise suddenly, and her lips part a little.

He got her hand, and held it, and still she did not speak, merely stood breathing high, and looking steadily at him.

Gibbs found his own voice curiously unmanageable. He cleared his throat.

"Ellen!" he said.

Another dance began, and another, and yet another. And through them all Ellen and Gibbs sat on the dark porch, over the softly moving water, and talked with that desperate deep relief that pilgrims know who find fresh, icy springs after the parching desert, or mothers know who weep beside the bedside of the child that will live.

It seemed to Ellen that all her life had been only a preparation for that talk. Gibbs's arm was about her, on the porch rail, and slipped over the pink gown was his big soft coat, faintly redolent of tobacco. Behind them long screens had been placed, to shut the porch into darkness, and farther down its length other gowns, of blue and white, were protected by other coats. But the two in the corner saw and heard nothing but themselves, unless now and then they noticed the moonlight that was making the bay seem like some detached and floating segment of fairyland, or heard the quiet plop of oars as some small boat slipped silently over the water.

Sometimes he made her laugh, and she would flash

him a look from averted blue eyes, and bring all her dimples into sudden play, and often she made him laugh, and would regard him with delicious childish seriousness until his mirth was explained. But for the most part they were serious, there was much to explain, much that was sad and poignantly sweet to remember, and with eloquent looks and monosyllables they relived it all, and found it inexhaustibly wonderful and strange.

And at midnight, true to her promise, Ellen was driven away, by Leonard Henshaw, her hand still warm from the touch of Gibbs's big hand, her shoulder still feeling the pressure of his protective arm, her heart and mind and soul in a whirl of starshine. Leonard could make nothing of her; like all her friends he expected some explanation, facetious or serious, of her curious conduct to-night, but Ellen was in a dream. She merely smiled at his hints, left him with hardly a good-night, and floated into her own doorway like something bewitched. She undressed, wrapped in a sort of love for the gown and the hair and the eyes Gibbs had praised, and lay down on her small white bed and extinguished her light so promptly that her restless aunt, in the next room, felt a sensation of gratitude.

But Ellen had no time to waste with sleep to-night.

Nor did Gibbs sleep. He sat outside his stateroom far into the morning, smoking, thinking, smoking again. At about four o'clock, when a faint hint of dawn was glimmering into the darkness, George, Senior, looked yawning out.

"For the Lord's sake—old man!"

"I know—I'm coming now." Gibbs arose, cold, yawning, and stretching. "I know," he apologized, smiling. And coming near to the tousled and pajama-clad form of his friend he said with a certain boyish appeal in his voice: "I'm awfully happy about something, George, and awfully—sort of scared. Wish me luck, old man!"

CHAPTER VI

"Tommy, dear," the little mother in the big blue coat said presently, lifting the child from her lap, and setting him upon his own sturdy legs on the deck, "run and tell Dad that Mother wants to see him! Tell him we're almost—almost—*in!*"

Her voice rose almost to song on the last phrase, and although the child was already out of hearing, her nearest neighbour, an elderly woman also comfortably stretched in a deck chair, heard her and smiled.

"You sound glad to be back, Mrs. Josselyn!" said she.

"I didn't know how glad I was going to be," admitted Ellen Josselyn, her happy eyes leaving the prospect of the dark waters of the harbour mouth, and the unmistakable approach of the solid blue shadows that mean land. "I don't want Mr. Josselyn to miss the first sight of Ellis Island and the Liberty statue, and all the skyscrapers!"

"Ah, we've an hour before we'll see them!" smiled the older woman. And she added with a sigh: "I wish I could be spared the homecoming, myself. I've friends here—but no one very close! And Italy is home to me now. I remember arriving years ago with Mr. Benson, my husband—long before my daughter's marriage, and death. But I really hardly feel myself an American now."

"I know!" Ellen said, warmly sympathetic. "I

feel that myself. Mr. Josselyn and I went abroad the very day after our marriage, and that was six years ago last October. We've lived in France all this time. Tommy was born there, and when we decided to come back to America I felt a sort of terror, actually! It seemed much, much harder than the original uprooting, strangely enough! I never have been homesick for America, but I'm homesick already for France! And yet, now that we're almost in, I'm beginning to be terribly thrilled!"

"My daughter's husband has married again," the other woman said, as little interested in Ellen's history as Ellen was in hers. "She's very nice to the little boys——"

Her voice died away on a dissatisfied note. Ellen let her eyes rest on the tumbling water again, and the nearing land. America again! Thirty-fourth Street again, Central Park again; after all, it was home. She had curiously, vaguely dreaded it, she had had her times of hoping never to return, and yet now she felt a sudden thrill and a rush of something like rapture in her heart.

She was an older Ellen, at twenty-nine, and an astonishingly developed Ellen. The six years had made a woman of her, and a woman of intelligence and charm. Travel and study had done their share, joy had had its part in the change, and sorrow, too. They had been full and glorious years, and looking back, Ellen saw them as years of almost unclouded happiness. Wifehood had brought her generous nature only what was fine and good, motherhood had brought her the boy that was the core of her heart. And motherhood had brought sorrow as well, for little Tom had had a sister for a few happy months, three years ago, and the baby

grave, in a strange cemetery, was never long out of Ellen's thoughts.

But that was the only shadow. Otherwise, it was all gain. The radiant girl that had sailed with Gibbs from this same harbour more than six years ago had not been an exacting wife. There was no background of spoiling and selfishness to make Ellen Josselyn a difficult woman to live with. Her joyous: "Oh, Gibbs, won't that be *fun!*" had charmed him, and perhaps a little touched him, a thousand times in those first days. Everything was delight to her, the ship, the new friends, the new gowns. Her eyes and heart were never tired of new impressions.

Paris was all she had ever dreamed for her life, much, much more than her brightest dream. They saw it first in the languid airs of autumn, and were snugly settled in the roomy apartment on Mont Saint Etienne long before the first snow. Ellen had danced in her joy at finding the four perfect rooms, the big studio with its view of roofs and river—for they were on the sixth floor—the two bedrooms that, if small, were sunny, and the kitchen where Yvonne was queen.

Yvonne was a Lilloise, a big, red-cheeked, mighty-armed grandmother, whose ideas of housekeeping and cooking made Aunt Elsie seem but an extravagant beginner. She was an artist, and she loved her art. The Josselyns, renting their apartment, and engaging Yvonne, had said to each other: "If we don't like the house, or if she doesn't suit, why, we can easily change!"

But they never moved, and never dreamed of parting with Yvonne. Life fell into a groove of joy and comfort undreamed by Ellen, and unequalled, Gibbs said, in his own experience. Yvonne was no hireling, she

was their loyal and passionately devoted guardian. She watched their meals, their health, their clothes, and their pocket-book jealously. And when Tommy came, and Ellen brought him in triumph from the American Hospital, Yvonne had a daughter waiting to be a perfect nurse for Tommy. Indeed, when the baby was three months old, and terrifying feeding problems began, did she not produce a good-natured peasant of a daughter-in-law, who would leave her own home and baby to give Tommy a little help over a rough bit of road?

And before Tommy came, and afterward, and always, how wonderful life was for Ellen! Exploring the magic city, with her hand in Gibbs's arm, watching content and ambition mark new lines in his face, hearing him say, a dozen times a day, that she had given him back his life; her happy, grateful heart was only too full. He began to work at once, and for awhile she worked, too. But swiftly she saw that her earnest and clever beginning was as that of a promising child. There were ten thousand girls in Paris who could do what Ellen could do.

Gibbs was a genius, she never doubted it, and it was only a year or two after they came to Paris that his world began to see it, too. He went straight at his portrait work, and he lived only for that, and for her. About them, on the left bank of the river, were swarming hundreds who were working as hard as they, and some of these were their friends. And Ellen, watching other women struggle and despair, in loneliness and poverty, wondered, with her old, sweet, childish surprise, why God had been so good to her.

She had her warm little home, safe above the struggle,

she had Yvonne to baby her if ever a dull hour came, or a moment's pain or doubt. She might put her warm little glove over the wet, cold hand of some other woman, and leave a coin there, and say, from the fulness of her heart: "I'm so sorry! Go get yourself some hot coffee——" She might watch, with half-sad, half-fascinated eyes, the dramas that went on about them, in the streets and the cafés, with Gibbs at her side, big and tender and protecting.

And presently she had Tommy, and they were playing at housekeeping in the tiniest of little lost villages in Brittany. These were days of sunshine, while Gibbs, wonderful in knickerbockers and a paint-smeared smock, painted, and Yvonne walked bareheaded to market, and Ellen played under twisted old trees with Tommy. Tommy had no nurse but his picturesque little mother now, for Ellen was thrifty, even in Paris, and Ellen had spent more than one evening on the arm of Gibbs's chair, working out the financial end of their problem. Their money must last until this time—or that time—they must think of the future.

Gibbs laughed at the future. He would catch her little figure, in its sea-green draperies, or in the gipsy hat and the apricot smock, and tousle her black hair, and kiss her. What did she think he was going to be a portrait painter for? Love? He was going to paint all the rich Jewesses in Paris.

She believed him, but still she watched the family expenses closely. In the astounding freedom of the world into which they had transplanted themselves it was a pleasure to do so. Nobody cared how the Josselyns lived, or where, or what they wore, or had in their drawing room. Their sole duty was to be happy, and

to get the joy out of every sou in their own way, and to be able to offer a friend a salad and a glass of wine, or the loan of a few francs, as the case might be, in an emergency. In America, Ellen would never have dared wind her dark hair about her head in the way that was so comfortable and becoming, and dress herself in cheap cotton frocks of plum blue or lemon colour, with accessories of Oriental scarfs, curious old jewellery, and the various buckles, bands, and belts that Gibbs delighted to find for her. It was not natural for Ellen to make herself conspicuous, no matter how sensible or comfortable she might find it. But in Paris no one is conspicuous, and the gods of American women—clothes, furniture, and table accessories—existed not at all.

When Tommy was two years old, and before the second child was born, Gibbs painted his wife. They were in Brittany again, and Ellen, with white sewing in the lap of a checked blue gown, and figure and face already caught in the first rising tide of motherhood, was set against a background of gnarled old grapevines. Gibbs called the picture "Wizardry." It was simply done, the woman's face was turned toward the sea beyond the grape-arbour, one hand, in the mottled light and shade, had been given a careless but most arresting beauty, but the face was merely a glimpse of curved, flushed young cheek under a wing of black hair.

The picture was hung in the Salon des Independents, and Ellen, when her delicate little girl was a few weeks old, went to see it. There was a crowd about it; there was always a crowd about it. It was the discussed picture of the year, but she always looked at it with

a little pang at her heart. She had been so happy in those sleepy July days in the grape-arbour; she had thought that the new baby would be like Tommy, strong and gay and hungry. And the tiny new thing, who had been named Rose for Gibbs's mother, was so frail. Even while she was looking at Gibbs's picture, his first success, Ellen's heart was in the little nursery on Mont Saint Etienne, hanging agonized above the little bed where Rose Josselyn lay quiet, apathetic, half asleep.

The picture, during the winter, caused a widening circle of comment and admiration, and presently Gibbs had his first commission, and was to paint a boy of ten, in the trim gray uniform of a military school, and receive two thousand francs for the picture.

So fame was coming, and fortune would come close on her heels. Ellen, sitting by the studio window in the winter afternoons, and looking out at the fluttering snow into which Yvonne had taken the dancing Tommy, mused upon the dream that had become the fact. She had Paris, Gibbs, and Tommy—so much more than she had asked! But the silent, apathetic little Rose was gone from the nursery now, never to lie against her mother's heart again.

Was that the cost of success—she wondered. Success was new, but ah, this constant hunger at her heart was new, too. How gladly—how gladly she would let the one go, if she might lose the other!

They went to Holland that summer, and were happy again, in a deeper and truer sense. Ellen knew the ecstasy of gain, now she gathered the difficult fruit of loss. Other women suffered and were strong, and she must be, too. She made herself join Gibbs on tramps

and outings, made herself smile and talk. She fought down the bitter sense of futility, the longing to cry out. "What use is it all? Nothing can give me back my daughter!"

Gibbs painted three more portraits the next winter, which made them feel rich; but he was working hard and enthusiastically in the atelier six mornings a week, and neither he nor Ellen were inclined to extravagance so that there was no particular incentive to seek commissions.

And so the exquisite years went by, and Tommy was three and then four, and still the Josselyns lived in their own happiness, shut away from the world, and glad to forget it. Ellen's whole heart was wrapped about her husband, her girlish idealism had never been disturbed. True, she knew now that Gibbs was human. She knew now that he could be unreasonable, that he had moods in which she and Tommy and Yvonne must keep even a crumpled roseleaf from his path. She knew that while he was less sensitive than she to the feelings of other people, and while she felt that everything he did was perfection merely because he did it, he liked to have his wife aware of the conventions; it distressed him when her artlessness and honesty made her seem in any way ignorant or at a loss.

But he loved her, she amused him and pleased his pride, and her happy ways with him, that sometimes were those of a daughter and a pupil, sometimes wide-eyed admiration, sometimes all motherly, were dear to him. He did not have to ask her if she loved him: he was all her world.

Suddenly, in the seventh year, a new note came into their conversations. Without any premonition they began to say: "If we do go back to America." Ellen was as innocent as Gibbs of any prearranged planning to that effect. They simply felt the possibility in the air.

"If we go—Yvonne wants to rest anyway—we need more room—we must move sooner or later—and of course Grandpa's getting so old—Tommy could wear this coat on the steamer—we could store this chest full of small things——"

So Ellen mused. Presently Gibbs's mind had seized strongly upon the idea. He would go to New York, and find a studio, and see what the prospect was of painting portraits there. After Tommy's birth, at Ellen's request, he had written his father, enclosing a little photograph of the small, bald-headed lump of babyhood that was Thomas Gibbs, Third, and the grandfather had eagerly responded to the overture. A magnificent gold-lined cup had come from Tiffany's for the baby, and presents on all formal occasions.

Now Gibbs began to think he would like to show his father the stalwart Tommy, who spoke two languages at five, and played his little violin so nicely.

Then, abruptly, it was settled, and they began to wonder how they had managed to stay away so long. Ellen, during the last busy days, would stop sometimes in her packing to look out of the undraped studio window. They had been so happy here since the marvellous days when she and Gibbs had unpacked the boxes, and laid the rugs, and hung the pictures with their own hands. Was it wise to run away from it all?

And then came the memory of Fifth Avenue in

spring sunshine, and the sound of one's own tongue spoken on all sides and the garden in Main Street sweet with lilacs, and she would smile again.

She smiled now as the little boy and the tall man crossed the deck to her. Gibbs was young, at thirty-eight, despite the silver hair. He had been playing bridge, and was glad to get into the fresh air, after the hot smoking room.

"You packed everything!" he accused her.

"Because I wanted you to be free to see the very first of the city!" she answered eagerly. "Look, Tommy, that's Ellis Island, dear, where all the immigrants have to get off. And look, there's Liberty!"

"It is darned thrilling!" Gibbs said, smiling, as they leaned on the rail. The ocean was left behind them, they were well into the river now, and on both sides the land was coming down to meet them. The Jersey shore was a tangle of factory chimneys wrapped in smoke under a bright April sun, but New York's astonishing silhouette stood out cameo-clear. It was nearly noon, and the air was warm, but there were heaps of dirty snow here and there in Battery Park, and on the shady sides of chimneys, on the tiled roofs. Trees were still bare, but Easter was near, and there would be thousands of lilies ranged in Union Square, under boughs just showing a faint film of green.

"We've missed all the ugly, hard part," Ellen exulted, "and we'll get all the glory of the spring!"

"I wrote the old man we'd go to the Brevoort," Gibbs said. "I bet we'll find a message there. They'll ask us down to the new house."

Ellen smiled. Her father-in-law and his wife had

recently taken possession of a new home at Wheatley Hills, a fashionable colony only a few miles from Port Washington. It would be rather fun to visit there, as Gibbs's wife, with little Thomas, Third. She well remembered the handsome woman who had been so bafflingly superior in her manner toward Mrs. Rose; her own—what was it?—step-mother-in-law now, so curiously had events come about.

And she would see Grandpa, too, and Aunt Elsie, and Joe. These were about equally unsatisfactory as correspondents; but Ellen knew that Aunt Elsie had been ill last winter, ill enough to have a little maid, but was well now, and that Joe was doing well with a publishing house, and that Gibbs's old friend, little Harriet Lathrop, had spent several summers at Sands Point, where her father had built a roomy white cottage, and that George Lathrop had taken Joe on one or two cruises, and had been a good friend to him. Ellen, like all good sisters, determined to take a hand in Joe's affairs.

"Gibbs!" she said suddenly. "Look—there by that little boy on the pier who's waving the flag! Isn't that your father—of course it is! And your step-mother, too—and there's Joe—there's Joe, the old darling—that's Uncle Joe, Tommy—Oh, Joe—Joe—Joe!"

"That *is* Dad," Gibbs said, deeply pleased and touched. "And there's old George—I call this decent! We've been away so long, Ellen, that I'd forgotten how nice it is to have folks! I suppose the dashing lady in the black hat is my mama? Wave your hand, Kid, that's your family! And try to remember the English for things, or they'll not like you!"

Five minutes later they were all together in a jumble of landing. Ellen was kissed on her suddenly wet cheeks by her father-in-law, and by George Lathrop, who had been best man at their wedding, and by the sweet and rather silent Joe. Joe was taller than ever, he would never be well-dressed or well-groomed, or have a particularly happy manner in company, but Ellen clung to the big, boyish arm, and laughed into his handsome, kindly face as if she could never feel and see and hear enough of him. He had improved so, and he looked so—well, so grown-up! After all, one's little brother was one's little brother, even if he was twenty-five! She found her father-in-law aged, he was somehow shrunken, and his face had grown leaner in its aspect. He wore a splendid fur-lined coat, gold-rimmed glasses, irreproachable gloves and footwear, and was a conspicuously dignified and fine old figure, in the confusion of the wharf. Lillian was so changed as to be hardly recognizable.

She was dressed with great severity, but everything she wore was fine and rich. Her skin was like a rose leaf, her great dark eyes were rimmed with faint violet shadows—eyes made for sorrow, but shining with pleasure and hospitality now. Ellen thought she had never seen whiter teeth, or a more beautiful scarlet mouth to enhance their whiteness. Lillian's thick, soft, golden-brown hair showed only a burnished band under her wide black hat. It was not a large hat; it was tipped like a hunting-hat over her eyes, and ornamented only by a tumbled cockade of cock's feathers; Ellen learned later that it had cost its beautiful wearer more than one hundred dollars. Her suit was plain, an iron-gray cloth bound in black silk braid, and she

wore loosely fastened across her shoulders sables of regal beauty. In one immaculately gloved hand she carried an enormous bunch of fragrant double violets, and through all the greetings she did not lay them down, nor put aside her immense muff.

She had been beautiful seven years ago, she was more than that now. She radiated charm and personality, there was a hint of sadness in her face when it was in repose, there were a hundred provocative attractions in her thoughtful smile. She was ready with a French phrase, a German phrase, she touched lightly upon the Italian political situation, she had the name of a Russian novelist readily upon her tongue. Ellen, when they were whirling from the dock to the hotel, complimented her upon her hat.

"And you from Paris!" Lillian's new, rich voice answered. The sables moved under a slight shrug, the red lips half smiled.

"My Paris isn't the Paris of the fashions," Ellen explained. "One never sees extreme styles there, except on the models at the races. And almost all my friends make their own frocks—and funny enough they are, sometimes!"

"I have a good woman here," Lillian said carelessly. "I'm too busy to worry much about it—but she looks out for me, and tells me what I need. George here laughs at me when I talk about studies and lectures," she added, glancing toward George Lathrop, who, with Joe, was with them in the limousine, "he thinks all women are born merely to shop and gossip, but fortunately, I don't worry much about what George thinks!"

"Fortunately!" the man answered, with a grimace

evidently intended for a smile. Ellen, a little surprised to detect an animosity between the two, realized that she was back in the land of unadjusted womanhood again. It would be hard to define, but she knew that only in America could the woman assume that attitude of childish importance, and the man so openly show his amused contempt.

She thoroughly liked George Lathrop, who was Gibbs's senior by only six or seven years, and his best friend. George was a lawyer and a man of importance, but he was somewhat insignificant in appearance, and his manner still betrayed the country boy who has fought his own way to the top. Ellen wondered that he could dare to snub the beautiful woman beside her, and wove a little dream to explain it, in which George showed a too-marked admiration for Lillian, and Lillian, repudiating it with dignity, angered him beyond forgiveness.

"You must help me get some new gowns," Ellen said, realizing for the first time in seven years that gowns really were important. "Of course at home—in Paris, I mean, I've worn only studio things." And she glanced down with some misgivings at the simple, almost childish, suit under the rough blue coat, and her sensible, neat little shoes.

"But, my dear, you should have gotten loads of things in Paris!" Lillian said. "You'll think they're pirates here!"

"Well, I did get an evening gown, and an afternoon dress," Ellen said. "Gibbs and I tried to pick out something smart. But really it is hard, there. There are so many new models, and one can't tell which is going to be adopted—and so many women

dress just to fit their own types, now, regardless of style!"

"Here we are!" Joe, who could not move his delighted eyes from his sister, said suddenly. They all got out at the great hotel, where, Ellen learned, they were to stay for a day or two, instead of the Hotel Brevoort, before going down to the country house, to which Lillian had given an Italian name, "Villino dell' Orto." After her frugal and exquisite economies, this prodigality was almost startling.

Josselyn, Senior, it appeared, kept a suite at the Biltmore throughout the entire year. He and his wife could come and go at their own pleasure, change in their own familiar rooms from street attire to evening dress, keep an appointment there with manicurist or masseuse, or entertain their friends with a cozy meal served before their own fire. To-day he had engaged the adjoining suite for his son's family; Ellen could only widen her blue eyes with pleasure as she studied the detail of the immense bedroom. There were a dozen shaded lamps, a desk delightfully equipped, deep chairs, soft rugs, and from the cushioned window-seat so wonderful a view of the great city that Ellen and Tommy could with difficulty be drawn away from it.

Below them were the bustling streets, the elevated trains rattling like toy trains over their little frames, the boats in the river moving like other toys. Smoke and steam rose gaily into the clear April air, little drifts of soot-stained snow were vanishing from the shady cornices. The spires of Saint Patrick's church rose against a sky of uncertain blue.

"Isn't this corking?" Gibbs exulted, when the younger Josselyns were alone.

"Oh, Gibbs, it's such fun! And aren't they dears to do it all—and aren't you glad now that I made you write when Tom was born!" Ellen had taken off the big blue coat, and the jacket of her suit, and appeared in a loose little blouse of dark blue velvet with a deep collar of old lace. Gibbs, who had brushed his thick mop, and washed his hands, now came over to kiss her, an invariable preliminary to meals, and touched the little waist with a sort of embarrassed and amused discontent.

"You'll have to get some clothes, woman!"

"Well, if your angelic father entertains us for a week or two," she whispered, laughing, "I'll be able to! Come, Thomas, we've rubbed the lamp! The genii will now bring us up a sumshus repast!"

"Really, mother?" the child, always ready for make-believe, asked eagerly.

"Really, you little goose! And speak English, Tom." She opened the door into the drawing room of the other suite, and there, to the child's delight, was the lunch-table, with two waiters hovering about it, and a shining display of covered dishes and steaming pots. They gathered about it immediately, Ellen between Joe and George Lathrop, Tommy chattering to his enraptured grandfather, Gibbs and Lillian making each other's acquaintance after the long years.

Afterward, Ellen walked to the lift with her brother, and stood there talking to him as if she would never be done.

"You seem to like Mr. Lathrop, Joe?"

"He's a king!" Joe said, with a quick meeting of eyes.

"And the boy, is he nice, Joe?"

"George—he's all right. He's in college now, Harvard."

"And how's Harriet? She must be——"

"She's nineteen."

"Is she all over the sickness now?" Ellen saw that she was not in his confidence. She had remembered suddenly that the tomboy Harriet had had a frightening illness about a year ago—something that their vague reports had given her to understand was like an infantile paralysis.

"Sure. She limps some—she's getting well. I pack her about a good deal!" Joe said noncommittally.

"Pack her about?"

"Yep. Take her walks, and get her over hard places." Joe fell silent, straightening the corner of her lace collar carefully. Something in his gravity troubled her vaguely, and she turned thoughtfully back to her room, wondering. At the doorway she met George Lathrop, also departing.

"My little brother has grown up!" Ellen said, with a rueful smile.

He answered her with another smile.

"Joe? Joe's a great fellow," he said. "We're very fond of Joe at my house. In some ways he's the most remarkable boy I ever knew!"

"Joe?" Ellen asked in pleased surprise.

"He's absolutely and utterly honest," George Lathrop said. "Things don't deceive Joe. I like to introduce him to people—if they've got anything that interests Joe, he gets it out. If they haven't, it doesn't matter how much champagne they open, or whether they have a season opera box or a villa in Italy,

they simply don't register with Joe. I think that fellow will go a long way! He's taught my boy more now than I could ever teach him, more than he'll get out of college. This New Year's Eve I let'em both come into town, to meet some friends of George's, and spend the night. It seems they broke away from the crowd, about two o'clock, and came to their hotel, but when Joe was asleep, George had promised to sneak back to the others. However, Joe woke up just as George was shutting the door, and I tell you there was the mischief to pay! Joe brought him home the next day, George looking like a whipped puppy, Joe in a passion—Joe wouldn't stay to dinner, wouldn't talk, and wouldn't wipe his feet on George! My boy had a hard time to make the peace, I can tell you."

Ellen laughed, and her cheeks glowed. She went back to Gibbs with her eyes shining

"Mr. Lathrop was talking so nicely about Joe, Gibbs!"

"Oh, that's a love affair all 'round!" Lillian said lazily. "Of course Harriet's feelings are no secret, I suppose I can speak of that, Tom?"

The older Josselyn shrugged his shoulders.

"She's a child, my dear!"

"She's not a child at all, she's a woman, as far as her feelings go," Lillian answered, with her indifferent smile. "She's plain, and she's not likely to meet any one else on the same intimate terms that she's known Joe. George is willing, Joe is willing—I suppose—and Harriet is more than willing."

"Joe!" Ellen could only echo, in amazement.

"Joe is clever, and steady, and sensible," Lillian said, "and George doesn't care about anything else.

His one terror is that his precious child will be snapped up for her money. Joe's position doesn't make the slightest difference to George!"

It was said so pleasantly, in her good-natured, indifferent manner, that the oddity of this sentiment, coming from Lillian, did not occur to Ellen, nor the propriety of her saying it to Ellen at all. The two women, utterly different in type, were inclined to like each other, perhaps for the reason that they lived in alien worlds, and spoke alien tongues. Ellen, clear of vision for all her simplicity and inexperience, knew that Lillian regarded her with a sort of indulgent contempt. A woman who was cheerfully unfashionable to the point of dowdiness, who was domestic and unselfish and contented, had no common ground upon which to meet Lillian Josselyn.

Yet Ellen's handsome husband was her own husband's son, and Lillian could not ignore her. So she kindly and pleasantly took Ellen shopping, quite obviously rousing herself from silence and her own thoughts, to meet Ellen's efforts at conversation halfway. She mildly advised a tailor-suit that cost ninety-five dollars, and a little blue spangled evening dress at nearly twice that sum, and she selected for Ellen a small three-cornered hat at forty-five dollars, and herself tied the seven-dollar veil that went with the hat. Lillian smiled her sleepy, pleased smile when Gibbs delightedly complimented his wife upon these garments, but Ellen knew that they were not a success. She needed all the accessories of shoes and silk stockings and collar and spats and jewellery; her very corsets and underwear were wrong. She felt that Lillian would take a Japanese or Esquimaux

woman in hand in much the same spirit, and with the same success. Lillian would compliment her, deliberately and kindly, but there were far better dressed women than Ellen whom she criticized with keen appraisal and biting derision; to criticize Ellen was simply not worth her while.

As the pleasant days went on, Ellen marvelled at her more and more. Lillian never talked of herself. She had her mysteries, her cryptic reserves. She had friendships of a sort with women, sometimes she tried to make Ellen express herself about them. And she had friendships with men, but of these she never spoke at all. She was the type of beautiful woman who can remain silent with perfect self-possession, and when she did speak it was to amuse her old husband, or to encourage Ellen and Gibbs to talk.

Her energy amazed Ellen. Lillian was never idle. She had her masseuse and hairdresser twice weekly, she studied two languages, and took a lesson in bookbinding every week, and never missed the Saturday lectures that were given by a certain Miss Roberts, in one of the hotels, every winter, on topics of the day. Almost every day Lillian had luncheon or tea with the women friends she met at lectures, lessons, or concerts, and despite her professed distaste for shopping, she shopped every day with a patience and cleverness that were an object lesson to Ellen. Lillian's corsets and lingerie were fitted as carefully as her blouses and skirts; cosmetics and complexion creams were a serious matter to her, and on one occasion, when Ellen happened to be with her while she selected a pair of slippers, they were exactly one hour in the shop.

In the evening occasionally all four went to the

theatre. But Lillian liked better to dine at leisure somewhere, and to meet friends, as they always did, and to dance. Gibbs danced a little, Ellen less. They sat and chatted with Josselyn, Senior, quite happily, enjoying the music and the general gaiety of the scene. Lillian's partners would bring her back, flushed, lovely, silent; she would exert herself to be pleasant to the group at the table until she was claimed again. She taught Gibbs new steps, but it was quite apparent that she enjoyed dancing with good dancers, regardless of her feeling for them as men. Sometimes they went to the tea dances that were the latest attraction at the big hotels; Ellen would feel a little sorry for her father-in-law. He was always well-groomed, interested, alert. She found a little pathos in his eagerness to join them in all their amusements, not to be a clog, or to affect their plans.

He treated his wife with unvarying courtesy, but he grew deeply fond of Ellen, and little Tom became the joy of his life. There were days when the three went together to the Park or the Zoo and chattered all day as if they had been of one age. And Ellen felt no pity for the silver head when she saw it bent against Tommy's black locks; somehow there was a dignity and a fittingness here that was lacking at the dances and the teas.

Lillian's friends gave her more clue to the character that puzzled her than Lillian ever did. These groomed and busy young women were duly introduced to Ellen, and although they frankly regarded her as an alien, they liked her, and laughed at her in all kindness and hospitality. She joined them at lunches and teas, and they talked to her about each other's "suitors." Ellen learned that Lillian had a suitor; all the other

women were keenly interested to know how much Lillian saw of Lindsay Pepper, did he send her flowers; had Ellen met him?

Ellen, keenly uncomfortable to find herself discussing Lillian's affairs at all, admitted that the older woman had introduced her to Lindsay Pepper. She didn't know whether he sent her flowers or not.

"You're too decent to give her away, Cutie," said Mrs. Jordan good-naturedly. "And I don't blame you. Lillian's too clever for words, anyway. I don't know how she does it. She could get any one's suitor away. Wait until you get some man——"

Ellen felt outraged; she tried to laugh.

"We're making you mad, and no wonder," said pretty Paula Woodward sensibly. "You think we're all silly, don't you? But we don't mean any harm, Mrs. Josselyn; it's just our reckless way of talking. Besides, if I had a husband as handsome as yours, I'd never look at another man!"

"Except Roger Young," Emelie Jordan said. Mrs. Woodward gave her one laughing, contemptuous glance, but later, when they could talk unheard, she asked Ellen if she had met Roger Young.

"I think Lillian introduced him to us the other night at Delmonico's," Ellen answered. Mrs. Woodward frowned in a puzzled fashion.

"What night was that?"

"Why, it was—Tuesday, I think."

"H'm! Tuesday." The other woman's face suddenly brightened. "Oh, yes, I knew he was there Tuesday," she said in a relieved voice. "He told me he was. Did you like him?" she asked with a cautious look about her.

"Well, I hardly saw him. He seemed very nice."

"What did you say?" Mrs. Woodward brought her wandering look suddenly back to Ellen.

"Just that he seemed nice. He was dancing with Lillian, you know, I hardly saw him!"

"Tell me exactly the impression he made upon you," Mrs. Woodward said. "Talk to me about him!"

The effect of this was to silence Ellen. But presently the other woman turned to her again, and began in a confidential undertone:

"Roger is peculiar, you know. Meeting him that way you probably *wouldn't* get much of an impression. Especially, if you don't mind my saying so frankly, as he can't stand Lillian. Most men adore her, you know. But Roger is an unusual fellow, and he never got over what Lillian did one time. All the girls know this, and there's no reason why I shouldn't tell you——"

Ellen, scarlet of cheek, listened to a long story involving telephone messages that were not delivered, speeches that were misquoted, friendship that was betrayed. Under the other woman's manner of generosity and indifference, jealousy and petty selfishness stalked uncloaked. Ellen felt hideously uncomfortable.

"Did you have a nice time?" Lillian asked, when she and Ellen were being whirled away from the lunch-party to a recital at Aeolian Hall.

"They—they gossip too much. About—even about each other, a good deal!" Ellen commented uneasily.

Lillian laughed, scrutinizing her lovely face in the tiny mirror of her vanity case as she touched her lips with red.

"About me," she interpreted, calmly. "That doesn't do any harm, Ellen. Those girls aren't capable of a genuine, good friendship between a man and a woman, they have to misunderstand, and construe it their own way!"

A great relief flooded Ellen's honest heart; she put her hand impulsively over Lillian's. It was the nearest thing to confidence that Lillian had vouchsafed her. The older woman smiled her composed and temperate smile.

"Just don't pay the least attention to them!" Lillian said indolently. Instantly Ellen was aware of barriers again.

CHAPTER VII

Rain kept the two families in the city hotel for more than a week of luxury and pleasure. Aunt Elsie, upon whom Ellen had descended for the day, had found a pleasant little country nurse for Tommy, the same maid that she had had during her illness, and Ellen consequently had nothing to do but amuse herself. The big car was at the ladies' disposal, Gibbs often went with them, his father less frequently. It was the end of the opera season, there were scattered concerts of importance, the season's dramatic successes were still running. Joe sometimes joined them in the evenings, and George Lathrop duly gave them a dinner-party.

To this party Harriet came, a thin, nervous, sweet girl, plain of face, but with a pretty manner, and most at ease with Joe. She accepted Ellen's overtures of friendship eagerly, sent her flowers, and showed in more than one way her pleasure in the companionship of Joe's sister.

So ten days went by, and long before they were over Ellen began to long for a simpler life, where Gibbs would seem her own again, and where Tommy might always be free, in the happy old way, to be in his mother's company. They would visit the Long Island house, that would be a simpler life, at least, and then they would find a studio and apartment of their own, keep the little Port Washington Lizzie for Tommy,

get a cook besides, and go back to their own way of living.

Lillian had told them something of the home at Wheatley Hills, "Tom had great fun designing it."

"You designed it!" the old man said gallantly.

"I stuck in everything I wanted," Lillian conceded, "and Tom almost lost his mind trying to reconcile Spanish tiles and old English woodwork and Dutch doors!"

"It must be wonderful and fearful to behold," Gibbs said later to his wife. "I have a vision of tapestries and Mission oak and black-and-white stripes and Tiffany lamps all merrily intermingled. Lillian would get what was smart, you know, if she lived in La Trappe monastery!"

Two days later they drove straight from the hotel to Wheatley Hills, and to the "Villino dell' Orto." It was a day of soft showers and uncertain sunshine. Ellen, sitting next to her father-in-law, who was driving the car, was in an ecstasy as she began to recognize the familiar country.

"This is our little outfit," Josselyn, Senior, said, at last, turning in at a white-pebbled drive, between great trees and spraying, enormous rose-trees that already wore young green. The hard-rolled lawns showed a faint, emerald film; bushes ready to bud were everywhere; in a few weeks the place would be a mass of fragrant bloom. All about were the curves and rises of wooded hills, beyond lay the Sound, coldly blue in the distance. Here and there another country home was visible; a stately façade of dark brick, or the classic green and white of the modern colonial wood. Each of these had its fifty or a hundred acres, its stables and

garage and lodge to match the house. The Josselyn estate was small, less than ten acres in all, there was a handsome fence, and some of the finest woodland on the entire island, but no lodge.

But Ellen had only a confused impression of these things at the moment; her whole attention was centred on the house. She gave Gibbs one amazed glance, he met her look, and they both burst into laughter.

"We've been had, old dear, what?" he said shamefacedly.

Lillian smiled contentedly.

"You *do* like it?"

"Like it!" Gibbs merely echoed. And Ellen said honestly: "I think it's the loveliest house I ever saw!"

It was Italian in type, the plaster walls stained a warm cream, the windows and doors placed irregularly; some large, some narrow. A wide stone stairway rose from the pebbled path to the second floor, climbing against the side of the house, at its base stood great jars of potted hydrangeas. Under the stairway water poured from a lion's mouth into a shallow basin, and above it, in the smooth façade of the house, a blue plaque was embedded in a vine-wreathed arch, a Della Robbia bambino spreading his little hands in untiring blessing over the doorway.

There was the perfection of exquisite simplicity in the whole, the perfection of absolute order and appropriateness. The three years that the house had been standing here might have been three hundred, so kindly did the trees enclose it, so readily had the bare vines made themselves at home. Even while the newcomers stood gazing at it, a nesting bird, with

a thread hanging from his bill, disappeared into the chimney ivy, and a maid, opening an arched door in the house wall, showed behind her trim little figure a sun-flooded vista of stone arches and tiled floors that tempted Ellen to an immediate investigation, and made her exclaim again.

They went up the wide outside stair, and through the dark carven wooden door at the top, and were in a quaint, long room marvellously panelled in rich wood, with a glorious view through enormous windows that were curtained only by thin widths of some dark silken stuff. The room was devoid of merely ornamental things, one splendid rug crossed the floor, logs blazed under the carved acanthus leaves of the great marble fireplace. There was a black oak table that might have come from a monastery, the chairs were large and comfortable despite their severity of line. The effect was of space, silence, and shadow.

Lillian, enchanted by her visitors' admiration, led them to other rooms. Here was her piano, with a harp beside it, in a small room lighted by three narrow gothic windows. Here was the breakfast room, bright and square, with Quimper plates ranged on an old dresser, and Perugian blue cottons at the windows. Sometimes they stepped up, and sometimes down, through exquisite doorways deeply arched; every vista had been studied, and made perfect. Sometimes Ellen looked down at the formal garden, with its moondial and its trimmed cypresses close to the woods, sometimes she laughed in surprise at finding herself unexpectedly above the tiled courtyard where maids were chatting in the sun, or crossed a stone balcony presumably leading into the library, to find herself in one of the long,

bare corridors again. Everywhere was the same effect of space, and restraint, and emptiness.

Gibbs presently went to his stepmother, and took both her hands.

"I congratulate you, my dear! I've not seen anything better in my life!"

She looked up at him with unsmiling eagerness.

"No, but truly——? You know I've been waiting for your verdict, Gibbs."

"It's a fairytale!" Ellen said.

"Of course I had a big architect to help me do it," Lillian said, with a prettily deferential glance at her husband.

"And we had that damn Pepper in the house for three months," the old man said mildly.

"Who's that damn Pepper?" Ellen asked, with her gay laugh. "Lindsay Pepper, the man we met?"

"He's a very nice fellow," Lillian corrected, with an indulgent smile. "He decorates, and picks out things for you, and so on—it's his business. Most people are afraid of him, but I am one of the very few who boss him about, and he likes it. He and I had great fights about everything, and I always got my own way. So, if you like it, I won't have Lindsay Pepper get the credit!"

"He got more than the credit, he got the cash!" said Josselyn, Senior, in an undertone, and with a mischievous look at Ellen.

"Don't listen to him," said his wife. She took Ellen and Gibbs to their own rooms, and before she even left them she stood for a moment, with one hand on Ellen's shoulder, and the other holding Gibbs's hand, as they stood before her.

"I hope you're going to be comfortable," she told them, with a wistful smile. "It means so much to your father, and to me, we——" There was a hint of feeling in her voice and as if she had not meant to show it, she laughed a little shakily. "We want you dears to like us!" she said. And immediately she was all practical. "I've put you both in here, Ellen, it's not the largest room, but it has the prettiest view, and the fireplace. And in summer, you can move if you like. And Thomas is right next door, across the bath. Lizzie can either sleep there or have a room upstairs with the other girls. Little Keno will look out for you, she's Japanese, but she understands everything, and if you ring, she'll bring you anything. Don't dress unless you want to; I'm going to get into something comfortable——"

She was gone, and the younger Josselyns left to smile upon each other like children in a fairytale. Ellen explored the little domain; every need had been anticipated, everything was perfect.

"These aren't Pembroke beds, but by George, they're awfully good imitations," Gibbs said, investigating. "And I like the goldfish floating about in that tall bowl."

"There are other goldfish downstairs, and did you ever see anything so wonderful as the flowers?" Ellen contributed. "Just freesia lilies in the music room, and masses of pussy-willows in the hall, and early violets here—Gibbs, dear," and she came close to him, and put her hand on his shoulder, "are we lucky, or what?"

"Did you get that delicate insinuation of what we were to do in summer?" her husband questioned

in turn. "Do you suppose they expect us to *live* here?"

"Gibbs," Ellen answered, with a cautious look about that amused him, "it looks like it!

"And you know," she went on happily, when she had taken a simple, soft little brown dress from the closet where Keno had carefully arranged all her clothes, and was brushing her dark hair, "you know, it would be simply wonderful beyond words to be here, Gibbs, and then for you to have a studio in town. I've always felt that it was a mistake for families to combine, but if we had the studio, and could stay there for a night or two, and then with your father and Lillian going to town as much as they do, and leaving us alone here, it wouldn't be like falling over each other all the time! And, Gibbs, if it's like this now, imagine what June will be—and how Tommy will love it!"

"She must be smart, you know, to get away with this!" Gibbs said thoughtfully, coming to the bathroom door with shaving soap spread over the lower half of his face just as Tommy in woolly pajamas came rioting through.

He had had his supper, and wished to find his books so that Lizzie could read to him. Ellen showed him where Keno had neatly stacked them, but before departing Tommy investigated her balcony, tied a string there with a magnet dangling from it, attempted unsuccessfully to get one of the green glass marbles from the goldfish bowl, and entered into several enterprises in the bathroom that wrung from his father an impatient "Stop that, Tom! . . . Do you hear me?" Gibbs, fully dressed, finally carried the squirming child to his

mother, for prayers, and Ellen, fastening the last hook of her brown dress, went to the fireplace for the final ceremony of Tommy's day. Then Lizzie, with a smile on what was usually a rather sad little face, carried him away.

It was just one of their happy, intimate hours; the years had been full of them. But they had never seemed anything but a miracle to Ellen, whose blessed privilege it was to be shut into four walls, evening after evening, with Gibbs and Tommy, to share their hours of relaxation and confidence.

She was happy to-night, happier than she had yet been in this old atmosphere that was yet so strangely puzzling and new. Life in the city had been trying, she had been conscious a hundred times a day that she was unfitted for it. But now she was back in the country, Aunt Elsie and Joe and Grandpa only a few miles away—this was her own atmosphere. They would soon dilute the luxury of Lillian's home with intervals in some simpler place where Gibbs could lunch in his old painty jacket, if he liked, and where Ellen could cook a little, even if it were on a gas stove, and garden a little, even if it were only in a window garden. And he would be painting all through the happy mornings, and she would go to market with Tommy beside her, and hear him his reading-lesson, and make him spend half an hour on exercises with his violin.

"What are you smiling about?" Gibbs asked, as they went downstairs, with his arm about the velvet dress. He had told her he liked that foolish little dress, and the violets pinned beside the prim white collar.

"You!" She gave him the usual answer, and as usual, he tipped her bright face up for a kiss.

A moment later her father-in-law called her from the entrance hall downstairs. Ellen ran down to join him, and to walk about the bare garden with him, respectfully asking him questions about the lawn and the roses.

Gibbs went on to the long drawing room, where Lillian was standing, dressed in some Oriental shapeless garment that gleamed with rich embroidery. She was staring down at the fire, her beautiful dark head bent; she did not seem to hear him come in.

When his shadow fell across her vision she looked up, her eyes grave. Then she smiled, and merely shaped the word "Gibbs" with her lips before dropping her eyes again.

"Ellen is out in the garden with Dad," Gibbs volunteered, rubbing his hands before the blaze. Lillian gave him an absent look, and fell to dreaming again. Little flames licked noisily about the backlog, in the silence.

After a few minutes Gibbs gave his stepmother a quick look; it was as if he saw her, young, beautiful, troubled, for the first time. Something was making her unusually silent to-night; he wondered what it could be.

"Headache, Lillian?" he ventured. The words sounded curiously intimate and tender as he heard them fall, he had a quick flash of diffidence. Did he call her "Lillian?" But of course he did!

She looked up with her slow smile.

"No, Gibbs. Just one of—" she passed her hand quickly over her forehead, frowned faintly, and sighed—"just one of my bad times," she said, very low, looking down at the fire again. "I'm not on speaking terms with your friend to-night!"

His friend? Gibbs could not understand her. She would not call Ellen that. She would not speak so of his father. He could only echo her words stupidly:

"My friend?"

"Your friend Lillian," she elucidated smilingly. Gibbs felt an unexpected sensation at his heart. He did not speak again, nor did she, and when Ellen and the old man came up from the garden, chilly and laughing, with a few early violets adding their wet freshness to Ellen's other violets, Lillian and Gibbs were still standing before the fireplace, and still silent.

Gibbs did not attempt to repeat this little conversation to his wife. To do so would be to give it an undeserved importance. He told himself that there was really nothing to repeat, and yet he thought of it a hundred times during the next few days.

That night at dinner he had twice looked across the dinner table straight into Lillian's eyes, each time experiencing that faint, pleasant shock in his heart. He began to think of her, to wonder what thoughts her silences covered, to notice her silk-clad ankle or her white, ringed hand. Cadences in her voice began to linger with him, she made life more interesting for him in an innocent, undefined sort of way. Living in the same house with her, and in a house that incidentally furnished so exquisite a setting for any friendship, began to seem like a scene in a play. She was always playing some part; it amused him to play an answering part of his own. He had never deceived Ellen. He was merely playing a vague little game that she would not have appreciated at its innocent worth,

and that might stop at any moment, leaving no one the worse.

Ellen had her own reserves, too, a tiny secret from Gibbs that worried her to an extent that she knew herself was entirely disproportionate. George Lathrop had taken the liberty of an old friend, and had advised her not to make her father-in-law's house her permanent home.

He had done it kindly, in the most brotherly manner, and without making it particularly emphatic, yet his earnestness had made Ellen vaguely uneasy, and she had not been quite happy since.

George had spoken on a certain beautiful May evening, when Ellen and Tommy, who had spent the day with her family in Port Washington, had come down to Sands Point late in the afternoon to see Harriet. Reaching home a little earlier than usual, George came upon them at tea. Tommy was riding about the garden on a golf stick, Ellen and Harriet were on the porch.

"Go telephone Lillian that I'm going to drive Ellen and Tommy home," George said to his daughter, "and put on a coat, Baby, and come, too!"

"Oh, now that's a lot of trouble!" Ellen protested. But the man, sipping his tea indifferently, merely smiled, and Harriet delightedly ran off to obey him.

"This begins to feel like spring," he said contentedly, with a nod toward the garden that was bursting with new green.

"It begins to feel like Heaven," Ellen answered. "I should have gone home long ago. But somehow there is always one day that seems to advance the spring by leaps and bounds; and this is the day! Tom and I

had luncheon with my aunt, and then Grandpa took him down to the water-front, and while I was hunting for them to take him home, Harriet came along in the car, and brought us down here for a talk!"

"You do her good," George said. "I wish you were nearer her!"

Ellen felt a warm impulse of affection. She had felt somewhat out of her element of late. She was not at ease in the new environment. She began to feel that the picturesque old dresses and the simple, hospitable meals, and the old laughing assurance, belonged only to the Paris life, and that she must change now, although she did not know how to change.

But she was always at ease with the clever, homely, blunt little lawyer, always happy with him and Harriet.

"Wheatley Hills isn't far!" she reminded him now. Instead of answering, she saw him frown, and fall to thinking, over his empty cup.

"You're going to be with the Josselyns all summer?" he asked, after a silence.

"I suppose so," Ellen answered. "Gibbs's father idolizes Tommy. They're wonderfully kind about wanting us, and they won't let us mention any other arrangement."

"I think you make a mistake," George said flatly. Ellen, who had been living in an atmosphere of honeyed sweetness of late, looked at him in quick and sensitive surprise.

"Of course Gibbs is looking for a studio in town!" she said uncomfortably. "Is it—is it that you don't think it is right for Gibbs to let his father—well, support him?" she asked bravely.

"That sounds like Joe's sister," George said, smiling. "No, it's not that. Tom Josselyn has more money than he can spend, and he hasn't done much for Gibbs, so far. No, it's not that. But—but I don't believe it's the happiest arrangement for any of you. Lillian, now—she's not a normal woman. She has her quarrels—her fancies——"

"I know you don't like Lillian," Ellen answered, smiling in her turn. "But she and I get along beautifully. We're not a bit alike, you know——"

"I should say you are not!" George interrupted. "Well, you know best. But I shouldn't advise it." And Harriet reappearing at that moment, he held Ellen's blue coat for her, and watched her button it over her plain pongee gown. An hour later, when they were coming home, he asked Harriet about her. "You've taken a fancy to young Mrs. Josselyn, Baby, haven't you?"

"Ellen? I love her!" Harriet responded enthusiastically. "Don't you think she's pretty, Daddy, in her dear little way? Don't you think she has lovely blue eyes? I think she's a thousand times prettier than Lillian——"

"Come now!" her father smiled.

"Oh, Daddy, I do! At least I think she's a million times *sweeter* than Lillian——"

"Ah, well, that's a different thing, Baby," he conceded with a sigh. But Harriet did not hear him.

"She doesn't seem to know how sweet she is, Daddy. Now think of her coming over here twice a week to spend the day with Mrs. Baldwin. To-day, she was roaming along the water-front, talking with all those old men as happily as if she never had seen—well, seen

things any different or lived any other life! She's just like a little girl. Mrs. Baldwin will say to her: 'Put on that apron, Ellen,' and she obeys just as if she was eight years old."

"Then you'd be ashamed of the Latimers, if you were any relation to them, Baby?" her father asked, with a sidewise grin. She laughed, flushed, and squeezed his arm in great felicity.

"Daddy, you're horrible!" she told him. And she added demurely: "You like Joe, don't you?"

"Who spoke of Joe?" her father asked innocently. "Joe who?" But Harriet would not permit this duplicity. She told him vivaciously that Joe was to come down to luncheon on Sunday, and they were to try the tennis, if there was no intervening rain.

To both father and daughter the lingering twilight of the season's first warm day was memorably sweet as they motored home. There were lilacs and fruit-blossoms in the village, doors were open, bareheaded women chatted over garden gates. All the country sounds were set free again, voices and the barking of dogs, and the honk of motor horns. A hundred little boats rode the satiny waters of Manhasset Bay; old Captain Latimer, sauntering home, lifted his disreputable old hat to Joe's friends from the Point.

"I never was glad that I'm going to be rich before," Harriet said softly after awhile. "It didn't make me happier at school, and it never has seemed to count very much since. But Joe's so ambitious, that I'm glad now—for Joe. He can travel, and after awhile he can write books, as he longs to do."

Her father glanced at her. She was looking straight ahead, into the feathery green tunnel that was the

road; her plain, intelligent little face was lighted with the great light of youth and love. He did not answer her. He thought of the nursery into which he had reverently stepped, nearly twenty years ago, to look at his daughter. And his heart was wrung with an exquisite emotion that was partly joy and partly pain.

Days went by, and were weeks. It was June, and still the younger Josselyns were domiciled at "Villino dell' Orto," where all the roses were in flower now, and the lawns as green as jade. Still Gibbs was desultorily hunting for the right studio, interrupting this enterprise whenever golf kept him in Wheatley Hills for the day, or when his father planned a two or three days' expedition for them all in the car.

Outwardly, the life they lived was ideal. The lovely house was at its prettiest now, and Lillian gave luncheon and dinner parties three or four times a week. She and Ellen motored to tea at the club, and brought the men home after their golf, or departed in great harmony for lunch or card parties, in the car. Ellen had some dainty new summer gowns, a rough crash with dark blue stripes, a handkerchief linen exquisitely frail and simple, a rose-checked French gingham in which even Lillian and her friends seemed interested.

But she was not happy. She did not want all these new luxuries and all these new friends; she wanted Gibbs, and she realized that they were daily growing further and further apart. He did not need her now; they had less and less to plan, to discuss, to decide.

In their first days in America they had gone to their

room to talk tirelessly, like children, to compare notes and exchange confidences. But they did this no longer. Gibbs was usually tired of talking on the brief occasions when he and his wife were alone. He talked at breakfast, talked while running into town in the car, met his old friends at noon and talked, came back to Wheatley Hills to be swept into the unending talk at the club, talked at dinner, and talked far into the night.

He would greet Ellen carelessly, and dress in silence. His life was full to the brim without her, all these lives were packed full without any particular reference to the claims of husbands and wives. Gibbs thought he was having a glorious time, he was excited, flattered, carried away by popularity. The men welcomed new blood, another rival on the links, another hand at cards, another eligible dinner guest, dancer, and *raconteur*. The women were all captivated by his unusual appearance, his easy French, his art, and his ambition. They found in his indifference a supreme charm. He did not play their game any more readily than his odd but nice little wife did, but while no man ever dreamed of taking the slightest liberty with domestic, serious, pretty little Mrs. Josselyn, half a dozen women at least would have been glad to be able to speak of Gibbs as a "suitor."

Lillian lazily called Ellen's attention to it: to the petticoats that always fluttered across Gibbs's path at the club, to the intimate conversations for which traps were eternally laid beneath his wife's very eyes, and Ellen was filled with a sort of sick anger and terror. Anger because she did not want to fight for what was by all rights her own, and terror because sometimes she

was smitten with the thought that she had nothing with which to hold him, should he try to go.

She could not be her old self in this environment. She no longer felt like the busy little wife and mother who had so gaily climbed up and down the heights of Mont Saint Etienne, Tommy toddling beside her, Gibbs rushing to the landing to meet her, or to bid her farewell. Surely this was not the same Ellen who went into Yvonne's kitchen and mixed "cornbread Americaine" to the amusement and admiration of the sturdy Lilloise? Had she, only a year or two ago, been able to call cheerfully to Gibbs through a Brittany twilight that he must undress Tommy at once, the bath was waiting, and was it the same Gibbs who had obediently come across high grass under gnarled apple-trees to present her with a warm, nude, dusty Tommy to bathe? Ah, and there were other times to remember: a night in a French hospital, and Gibbs's shining head against her arm on an immaculate counterpane, and the tiny cry that was so soon to be stilled echoing through the gas-lighted, hot room.

But at this memory the thick tears would blind Ellen's eyes. She had mourned her baby, her delicate, wistful little Rose, but she looked back at that sorrow now as something sacred, something precious, something that had bound Gibbs and herself together more strongly than joy.

She would go into the nursery at "Villino dell' Orto" and begin to busy herself about Tommy's little person. Was he going to bed? Let Mother undress him. She would fall into deep musing over the little buttons and straps.

"I can undress myself, Moth'!" Tommy would

protest, wriggling. She would catch the warm, hard little face to hers in a hunger of love. Perhaps the child would glance at her in surprise.

"Are you crying, Mother? What for?"

"Indeed, I don't know, Tom!"

Their first real estrangement came this summer. Not that Ellen and Gibbs, as normal young persons, had not quarrelled before. There had been occasions, in the very early days, when a fancied coldness in his tone, or a letter that Ellen must write to Joe in the hour Gibbs wanted to read to her, had caused them acute wretchedness for hours, or minutes that seemed like hours. And then there had been the day that Gibbs was so rude to the Lanes, innocent callers at the studio, and there had been the awful day he whipped Tommy, after, as Ellen put it, deliberately goading a baby of less than four years into such a state of excitement that he didn't know whether he was telling the truth or not.

But this was different. Gibbs had taken a dislike to Joe and he and Ellen could hardly mention Joe without feeling. Gibbs told Ellen impatiently that Joe was all right, he might be a decent enough fellow and all that, but that he, Gibbs, did not like to have Joe choked down his throat all the time. Josselyn, Senior, was inclined to be hospitable to Ellen's brother, to bring him home to Sunday lunch, or to keep him for dinner after the Saturday tennis. George Lathrop was often at "Villino dell' Orto," and Harriet and Joe naturally drifted together. But Lillian, Ellen divined at once, did not like Joe; Joe had absolutely nothing to contribute to Lillian's life, and Ellen suspected that

Lillian, in her languid and indirect manner, had influenced Gibbs without his knowing it.

One hot evening late in June Ellen went upstairs tired and exasperated after a wasted day. She had motored to Huntington with Lillian for a luncheon and bridge party, and had been talking and eating and laughing all day. Now her skin felt dry and hot, her head ached, and she was experiencing the exhaustion of a suddenly lessened tension. She had stopped at the nursery to find Lizzie alone and sulky. Mr. Latimer had not yet brought Tommy back'm. Yes'm, it was quarter past six.

Ellen went on to her own room to find Gibbs flung across the bed in one of the heavy naps with which he sometimes recruited his forces for the evening's demands. He rolled over when she came in, and lay there blinking and staring between yawns at the ceiling.

"Time is it?" he asked presently, and when she told him he added: "Damn a seven o'clock dinner anyway! My head feels rotten!"

"You smoke too much!" Ellen suggested dispassionately.

He himself had often admitted it, and also admitted that he could not drink as steadily as the other men. But he scowled at this reminder. The truth was that late hours, rich food, hot weather, alcoholic stimulants, and the unnatural life they were leading were bad for them both, and any pretext would serve in these days for a quarrel.

"Where's Tom?" Gibbs now asked. Ellen knew that he knew, and that he had deliberately selected a question that would imply a criticism of her management.

"Joe's coming over to dinner, Gibbs, with the Lathrops. And he isn't to dress, you know, for they've been out in the boat all afternoon. So I said not to bother to get Tommy home before seven, he can have a simple dinner and pop into bed as soon as he gets here."

Gibbs was now sitting on the edge of the bed with his silver hair in a mop over his flushed face, and his head in his hands.

"I must say I don't approve of this constant upsetting of Tom's routine!" he observed.

Ellen, now at her dressing table, with the stiff lines of a silk robe falling about her, flushed in her turn.

"Last night you kept him up until quarter of eight," she answered lightly. She scored here, for Lillian had had friends for a later dinner the day before and had captured Tommy, and made him bring down his violin. The child had been reluctant to play the simple little airs he knew, and Gibbs's paternal authority had been needed, and the threat of a whipping. Ellen had been excruciatingly uncomfortable during this scene, and had presently escaped with Tommy upstairs, almost as near tears as the child was.

"You simply said that to be nasty," Gibbs remarked with some heat. "You know the child is out too late, you know that no sensible mother would allow a child of six to go off in a yacht, and yet you deliberately permit——"

"There was nothing deliberate about it, Gibbs! Tommy and I went over to see Aunt Elsie this morning, in the small car. And Joe was home, and asked to keep him. You know perfectly well——"

"I know perfectly well that any crazy thing that Joe

proposes appeals to you! Anything to show me how absolutely indifferent you are to my wishes!" Gibbs's tone was bitter; he walked to his dresser, and gloomily began to jerk open the drawers. Ellen, frightened, began to feel that their idle anger had carried them too far.

"Gibbs, don't talk like that!" she said, in a changed tone, a tone more distressed than angry. Ordinarily, the faint indication of a desire to conciliate would have softened Gibbs, but he was still in the prickly discomfort of awakening after a daytime sleep, and he answered bitingly:

"Oh, don't let anything I say count! I'm not Joe, of course!" And as Ellen was silent, with hurt tears in her eyes, he added grumblingly: "If George Lathrop wants Joe for a son-in-law, just because his daughter has set her heart on him, and if you want to see your brother every day, and three times a day—well and good! All I say is: I'm done!"

"It's Lillian that has set you against Joe!" Ellen burst out angrily. "I know the way she talks about him, in that pleasant, amused voice of hers! She's made you think he was countryfied and stupid and slow just because he's never fallen in love with *her*——"

"That's enough!" Gibbs said, in a stern voice. Ellen, even as she spoke, had had a feeling that it was more than enough. She stopped speaking, ashamed and sulky, and went on with her hairdressing. There was a silence in the room for perhaps two minutes, and then Gibbs added with cold disapproval: "After all Lillian has done for you—treating you absolutely like a sister——!"

Then again there was a pause, broken this time by

the entry of Joe and Tommy from the nursery through the bathroom. Joe was in white flannels, and looked his best. He was burned brown by the afternoon on the water, and there was a pleasant new gravity and thoughtfulness in his manner that Ellen liked. She had noticed it before to-day, but just now it seemed especially marked.

Tommy had had his supper on the yacht, it appeared. He was theoretically anxious to be allowed to stay up, actually his tired, sunburned little lids were falling over his eyes. Ellen welcomed her little brother almost as warmly as she did her son. She put her arms about Joe's neck, and the silk sleeves slipped up to the shoulders. She knew Gibbs particularly resented Joe's manner of coming and going informally to and from their rooms, but she could not be unkind to Joe to please Gibbs.

"If you don't mind, Joe—Ellen and I are dressing," Gibbs punished her by saying icily. Joe, instantly apologetic, withdrew. The Josselyns did not speak to each other for the remainder of the period of dressing, nor, except when it was unavoidable, for several days.

CHAPTER VIII

Gibbs had set up his easel in his father's study, and was keeping his hand in, as he expressed it, by making a pastel sketch of Josselyn, Senior. The study was a small room so cunningly concealed by the mazes of the house that the occupant might be sure of privacy whenever he desired it there. A stairway wound over it, and a deep slope of ceiling gave an odd touch to the room; there was a small fireplace with dogs of filagree Italian iron-work, the handsomest rug in the house was here; an old chest of Spanish make stood beside the fire; a tattered tapestry covered almost an entire wall. The study was lighted at night by several hanging lamps of brass or iron each one a museum piece, and in the daytime by four small square windows set with green bottle-ends. The curiously panelled walls had been brought entire from England, as had the smoke-darkened mantel. It was a treasure house of everything the old man held especially dear. Over the fireplace were the crossed sword and gun he had carried in the Transvaal, twenty years ago. Set between the teakwood surface of a long narrow table and the crystal that covered it was a curious scroll, preserved miraculously from the Ming dynasty; on the mantel stood a gentle ivory Virgin that had been washed from some wreck to the coast of Portugal, a tiny figure of superlative beauty and simplicity.

Ellen loved this room, and sometimes spent a happy

evening here, if Gibbs were kept in town by any especial affair at the club, playing cribbage with her father-in-law. Lillian, drowsing beside the fire, would listen half-smiling to their war of words and points, open her book, and shut it idly again. She would be quite frankly bored on these occasions, but Ellen loved the quiet and peace, and suspected that the old man was never so happy as in this environment.

It was his whim never to allow strangers in this room. Ellen, with his permission, had taken Joe there, and marvelled with him over its various contents. Tommy was a privileged visitor, and came and went with royal contempt for restriction. He turned the big key in the Spanish chest, a key half as long as his small arm; the gun was lifted down for him to handle, it was to be his gun some day; he hung over the Chinese scroll in utter fascination. He deeply amused his grandfather by calling it "our room," indeed all the "Villino dell' Orto" was to Tommy now "my house."

Gibbs painted his father as they who knew him so often saw him, his silver head fallen slightly forward, his eyes half shut in smiling reverie, his pipe in one fine hand, and the other lying arrested on the open pages of a great book. Lazily done in the spare hours of a few midsummer weeks, it was stamped by the touch of a great artist. Presently Lillian had it carried to the upstairs drawing-room, where all the world might admire it, and Gibbs was more of a lion than ever.

There was no formal reconciliation between Gibbs and his wife, but after a few days they began to speak to each other again. The breach did not entirely heal,

however, and Ellen felt a change in their relationship from that day. Gibbs went to the city three or four times a week. Sometimes Ellen went with him, and they hunted for a studio together. But the old spirit of comradeship seemed gone.

He came back from town one day and announced that he had found his atelier, describing a place that sounded near enough to his ideal. But Ellen's heart turned to lead as she heard him. It was not to be a home—just a work shop! His home life was still to be here. It was on Fifty-ninth Street, flooded with north light, one enormous room, one tiny room, and a bath, and the rent was twelve hundred a year.

"And janitor service included," Lillian added unthinkingly. Ellen and Josselyn, Senior, looked at her in surprise, for her tone was not that of question. "I suppose?" she said, quickly glancing at Gibbs, and Ellen saw her colour rise. Instantly she knew, with a shock of almost prostrating jealousy, that Lillian had seen the studio. The older woman had been in town all day, and had picked up Gibbs at the club to bring him home. They had done this before—there was no harm in that——

"Certainly!" Gibbs answered smoothly. His colour swept up, too. Ellen felt an agony in her heart that was almost unbearable. He had taken Lillian to see it—he had poked about it first with her—opening doors, discussing advantages and disadvantages——

There were guests at the table, and she must keep her self-control. Dazedly she laughed and talked, and dazedly she somehow got through the evening. There were six of them, and they played a game of bridge, interspersed with music from the phonograph, with

the passing of candy, and the idle discussion of the new magazines. It was midnight when the younger Josselyns went upstairs.

"Gibbs," said Ellen then, from a bursting heart. "Did you take Lillian to see the studio?"

She knew him so well; she could see the irresolution in his eyes. Denial?—no, he would not lie unnecessarily to her.

"Yes, I did," he said reluctantly. If she knew him well, he knew her, too. He had been watching Ellen uneasily all evening, he was ready for this. "Yes," he went on innocently. "Do you mind? She came for me at the club, at four, and we had to go right up into that neighbourhood—I'm sorry if you mind!"

"If you thought I wouldn't mind, why didn't you say so straight out?" Ellen demanded. She thought she had him, but Gibbs, hanging his tie on the rack, merely looked thoughtful.

"If I tell you, will you please not mention it?" he surprised her by asking. "It's this: Dad hates her to go anywhere with any other man, even with me. He's perfectly decent about it in public, and he gives her the deuce in private! He was to be with us to-day you know or she never would have come for me at all —she's awfully sweet about it, and as usual, she humours him!"

"She's—clever!" Ellen said briefly. If Gibbs did not like this enigmatic answer, he gave no indication of displeasure beyond a faint scowl. He was presently sound asleep, with no further reference to the matter.

But Ellen, twisting with wretched thoughts, lay awake for hours. At first she mused only upon the bitterness of the simple fact: Gibbs had selected a

studio without any appeal to the judgment of his wife. Ah, how different that was from the choosing of the last studio, the blessed little apartment on "Madame la Montaigne": she had been on his arm then, exclaiming over rents, dimpling on the dark stairs they climbed and climbed and climbed after the concierges! How they had exulted over the boxes from home, over the placing of every chair and rug, and how they had sallied forth, hungry and tired, to be fed and soothed and amused by the city of romance and beauty!

These thoughts were sad enough, and tears began to creep down Ellen's cheeks, and her head to ache with her efforts at self-control. But presently a fresh thought came, and the tears dried, and Ellen's heart began to beat hard again with agony and fear.

Lillian had gone into town the night before, Tuesday night, to dine and spend the night with friends, and Gibbs and his father were to take the car in, on Wednesday morning, and meet her for lunch. Ellen had been originally included in this plan, but had excused herself because Tommy's nurse was not well, and his mother was enjoying a monopoly of his care for a few days. And on Wednesday morning Josselyn, Senior, had asked Gibbs to go to the city without him, he had really preferred the idle country day with Ellen and Tommy. He had telephoned Lillian at her friend's hotel that Gibbs had the car, if she wanted it she was to telephone Gibbs at the club. Now Ellen writhed with the sudden conviction that they had met in the morning, and lunched together, and hunted for studios all afternoon.

She dared not ask him: it was to ask him to confess to a lie. More than that, it was to kill her confidence

in him with one blow. But Ellen never knew a moment's ease after that. She looked at Lillian's beautiful, sphinxlike face the next day, vainly trying to read it. Her heart began to beat suffocatingly when her father-in-law chanced to ask his wife, at luncheon, how she had spent the previous day. Was it mere accident that took Lillian's splendid eyes to Gibbs's before she answered? She had shopped with Mildred, and had seen her off at one o'clock, and had had a sort of luncheon-tea all by herself.

"You should have come straight home; that was a tiring visit," the old man said. Lillian smiled at him affectionately for her only answer. Ellen felt that she never appreciated the safety and the power of silence.

"You had no trouble getting hold of the car?" Josselyn, Senior, pursued suddenly.

"No." Again she glanced at Gibbs, again was silent. Gibbs was the next speaker, with a cheerful and general inquiry:

"Who's doing what this afternoon?"

The studio was formally opened in September, with a tea. The artist's pretty, blue-eyed little wife was present on this occasion, suitably, nay, charmingly, dressed, chatting with neglected guests, keeping a watchful eye upon tea-cups, playing her part well. His father was also there, a handsome and dignified figure, erect, white-haired, obviously full of pride in his son. And the little, dark-haired boy was there, for a few minutes, keeping close to the musicians, amusing the ladies with his pretty French.

But it was his beautiful young stepmother who

shared with Gibbs Josselyn the interest of his guests, who was with him the romantic and fascinating centre of attraction. Lillian was at her loveliest, radiant and smiling, the mysterious and astonishing perfection of her face enhanced by the Juliet-like little cap of pearls that held her glorious hair in place, and by the rich colours of her gown. She wore a marvellous garment of old brocade, in which fruity colours were mingled with gold and silver threads, and from her shoulders a filmy black overgarment floated loose, caught with a bracelet of pearls at either wrist, and weighted loosely at its hem by dull embroideries in pearls. Lillian said that she had had this robe for years without an opportunity to wear it; this was her opportunity, and she made the most of it. Anything more lovely than the picture she made in it, even heartsick Ellen had to admit she could not imagine.

Wherever Lillian moved, the crowd swayed with her, and in it was always the silver head, and the tall, trimly-built figure of the hero of the hour. Her rich, amused voice, with its undercurrents of mystery, of suggestion, was the foundation of the conversation. And when she turned to Gibbs, as she was constantly turning, and asked him a simple question and received his answering monosyllable, it would have been an obtuse observer indeed who did not instantly perceive the thrilling current of awakening passion that ran between the two. His lightest word to her was fraught with it, his most fleeting glance betrayed it. At the end of the long three hours, when the guests had lingered out, one by one, and she stood by the fireplace, tired, drooping, superb, barely raising her eyes as she spoke to him, they might have been alone in the

world. What did he say as he bent toward her, what did his smiling eyes say?

Ellen did not know, or care. The words were nothing, the look was nothing, it was the trembling intensity with which they charged them that ate into her soul like acid upon a plate. None of them was sane now, Ellen perhaps the least of the three. She was burning with an agony of jealousy and doubt and anger far more painful than any actual fire would have been. She was conscious of Gibbs and Lillian every instant of the day.

They were not often alone together, after all. A moment in the long drawing room, before dinner, a few sentences murmured in her ear as Gibbs crossed the tennis court at Lillian's side, perhaps a stolen tea-hour once a week in the city; this was the most. Even for this there must be endless contriving and tireless intrigue. Ellen could not tell what was suspicion, what fact, what was mere innocent chance, and what was deliberate arrangement.

Sometimes, watching, watching, watching, forlorn and lonely, she longed to tear aside the veil of kindness and happiness in which her life was wrapped, and fling herself sobbing upon her husband.

"Gibbs, Gibbs, my darling! How much of it is true—how much of it is my wretched imagination? Have you let yourself come to care for her—have you forgotten me? I am your life—I am your past and present—I alone! Let us leave all this behind us and go somewhere where we may be poor again, and you shall paint, and I will mend and cook, and all the old joy will come back to us again!"

She dared not say it. What woman ever did dare?

She had lost so much, she dared not risk more. Ellen never had had much self-confidence, she lost it all now. She became afraid. Lillian could take Gibbs's love away from her, perhaps Lillian could make him leave her and Tommy completely. Perhaps Lillian wanted more than his passing admiration. Well, and if so, what could a tearful, disheartened, crushed little Ellen do?

Sometimes, in her misery, it would seem to her that her reason must give way. The blow had been too sharp and too sudden. Why, they had reached America only a few months ago, and he had been all her own then, he had spoiled her, and idolized her, and told her all his joys and sorrows. And now she felt that they hardly spoke the same tongue.

She would take Tommy for long walks through the sweet country lanes, and come back with her arms full of goldenrod and the first red leaves. And while she walked she would be busy trying to persuade herself that it had all been a sad dream. Gibbs had perhaps fancied Lillian for a few weeks in the summer, but it was over now. It had waned, it was dead, he was turning back to her again. She was sure of it.

And then would come the hour of dressing for dinner, with a kindly and abstracted Gibbs, and the dinner hour itself, when Ellen was silent, and the old man pleasantly talkative, and when Lillian and Gibbs, barely addressing each other, were wrapped in a quivering zone of thrilling communion. Ah, she could not bear it—she could not bear it——! She was hardly conscious of what she said or did, as courage and hope died out of her heart, and the familiar torture recommenced.

Gibbs was entirely unconscious of her suffering, because he was almost unconscious of her existence. He had never forgotten his wife for his business or his art, as many men do, but in the intensity of his new passion Ellen was completely lost to him. So might a man feel if he were suddenly stretched upon the rack.

Gibbs knew that Ellen was there, just as Tommy and Lizzie and his father were there, in the house at Wheatley Hills, but his senses responded to nothing but Lillian. He talked to his father, to Lizzie, to Ellen, and he read books to Tommy and even played with the child, but all the time his veins ran fire, and all the time his mind was busy anticipating the next moment he might have alone with her, or remembering the last. The words she had said—she said so little—the touch of her satin-smooth hand, the look in the sombre, lifted eyes, these were his food, his drink, his waking and his sleeping. She had told him of her girlhood, of her loveless marriage that yet she had managed to make honorable and happy, of her utter loneliness. In broken phrases exquisitely significant she had told him of the joy of his coming. All this had not been given him at once, but in a few words by the moondial one evening, and a few more murmured at the fireside the next night, while Ellen was idly turning and trying music at the piano, and the old man sat reading under the lamp. Tiny snatches of confidence, infinitely dear, and—Gibbs might have said—entirely innocent!

A moment came when he had her in his arms. Only a moment, but it left its scar on them both. They were in the studio, Lillian and her husband had called to bring him home, and Lillian had run up the stairs, and come in upon him in the dusk. His subject, one

of the winter's prospective débutantes, had gone away with her maid, and he was alone. Lillian, with her bright hair trimly covered by her motor-hat, and her figure lost in the folds of a loose, soft, mustard-coloured coat, had come close to him, had stood staring at the picture with her mysterious eyes.

"Gibbs—it's too wonderful!"

"Like it?" Gibbs asked, trying to seem indifferent to her praise.

"What you might have done—what you might have done in a different environment!" Lillian said, as if to herself. "To tie you down to domesticities—*you!*"

The soft, deep voice died away into silence. It was twilight in the studio, the end of a wonderful Indian summer day was dying in the park. A cooler breeze than the city had known for many hours drifted in through the open studio windows, faintly the strains of a hurdy-gurdy came gaily from the street: "Where the River Shannon's Flowing——"

Gibbs was perhaps a little tired. The day had been long and hot and dirty. He glanced at Lillian, all fragrance and freshness, ready to whirl him away into another world of greenness and silence and beauty. Her frail white blouse was open at the throat, a faint perfume disengaged itself from her, and, through his sleeve, he felt the delicious warmth of the hand she had laid, as if unconsciously, upon his arm.

Suddenly he put his arms about her, crushed her to him, and kissed her hungrily. She did not resist him, but brushed her lovely face aside, so that his second kiss fell on her white temple, where the golden-brown hair was swept back. He felt her breast rise in a quick

breath against his heart, and the fingers on his arm tightened.

When, after a dizzy moment, they stood facing each other, breathing hard, and still with fingers locked, she seemed as confused as he. She did not smile, there was a half-frightened, half-questioning look in her magnificent eyes.

"I'm sorry!" Gibbs said, in a whisper. "I'm awfully sorry!"

Lillian did not speak. She released her hands, and went slowly toward the door. Gibbs remained standing where he was, motionless.

At the door she hesitated, her back toward him in its loose coat of mustard colour. Suddenly she turned, and over her shoulder gave him a swift, half-sad, half-mischievous smile. Then she was gone.

A vista seemed to open before Gibbs with that smile. For days he saw nothing else, for days there rang in his head only a bewildered question.

After this episode Lillian quite pointedly avoided him. She was seriously trying to get her thoughts in order. She was bewildered herself. Lillian had begun her flirtation with Gibbs just as she began a flirtation with every other eligible man. Her way with no two of them was the same, but she rarely failed. Upon such men as Joe and George she wasted no time. Honest, simple, blue-eyed Ellen might have them unchallenged, and might discuss with them the proper culture of hollyhocks, and the weather, and Tommy's latest precocity. But Gibbs had been marked for her steel from the moment when her eyes had found his silver head next to Ellen's, on the steamer deck.

She had won him with the oldest and simplest method. Lillian might have said that there are many tools for the opening of a man's heart, but flattery is the handle that fits them all. She had flattered him so steadily yet so subtly that before many weeks Gibbs had come unconsciously to hunger for the sweetness of her glances and her words, had known that no least charm or gift of his was unappreciated. She had told him that there were beauties in his hand, in the crisp curve of the silver hair from his forehead, she had said that there was sometimes a look in his eyes that made a little boy of him again. She had a hundred names for him; he was "her firebrand," "her hawk," he "frightened" her, he was "cruel" to her. Sometimes she would thrill him from head to heels by raising piteous eyes to his face, and half-murmuring, half-whispering:

"Don't—don't look at me so, to-day, Gibbs. I'm sad enough without that terrible look of yours. It makes me a naughty child again, Gibbs—I'm afraid of myself when your eyes say things like that!"

It was no longer play-acting for Gibbs, although there was no real tragedy in it for him yet, there was nothing but excitement and suspense, and thrilled anticipation. He did not definitely plan any future for their love; perhaps he did not even call it love. He was carried off his feet by the atmosphere of adulation in which he was floating, and Lillian's extraordinary physical charm had bound him tightly in her toils. Again like a man on a rack, he was conscious of no future, no past, it was all present. His thoughts went no further than the tea-hour, when he might find her in the long drawing room, or than the approaching

evening, when she would sit, superbly silent and lovely, at the dinner table, listening, smiling, and occasionally bringing the full glory of her eyes to meet his.

With Lillian, too, the game had progressed beyond its calmly defined limits. She was absolutely incapable of love, as she herself knew. She had never loved any human being but herself in all her life, although she had cultivated in herself many of the soft and endearing appearances of love. The sex sense, also, was strong in her, she had more than her share of unfailing instinct in this respect, and perhaps the only times when she was truly happy were when she knew herself to be drawing steadily toward her some new admirer. For this end she dressed and studied and preserved her beauty, for this end she went about from lecture to concert, from tea to dinner. The world was full of possibilities along her especial line of conquest, and Lillian drifted like an octopus on soft tides, and laid her gentle tentacles upon whatever she desired.

She loved the preliminaries, the first full, innocent look into a man's eyes, the first significant phrase that brought to his consciousness the startling knowledge: "Why, I am I, and you are you!" She knew the pretexts by which he would manage to send her a first note: she knew just what to say and what to imply in her first answer, and that he would keep it, and read it a hundred times.

To have her handsome son-in-law at her feet was a delicious experience for Lillian. Like Gibbs himself, she was always conscious of the exquisite setting afforded by the "Villino dell' Orto," and of the dramatic elements of the situation. But of late there had been a new possibility in her thoughts.

She had been intensely surprised at the experience of Gibbs's studio tea. He had sent out perhaps a hundred and fifty invitations, and Lillian, working over the list of guests with Ellen and himself on a summer morning, had been astonished at his self-confidence. She had not known that he could claim so many of the city's distinguished men and women as his friends. Her own social experiences had been marked with extraordinary successes, the Josselyn name had been a powerful "Open, Sesame," but she knew in her own soul that there had been failures, too, snubs and coldnesses, there were persons who never had accepted the second Mrs. Josselyn, and who never would.

She said to herself that Gibbs's so-called friends would not come to his tea; but they did come, and their attitude of affectionate admiration toward him was not lost upon Lillian.

Hitherto her position as the wife of a prominent and rich man had satisfied her. She had never outlived her first sense of triumph in achieving it. Only a year or two before she had assured Lindsay Pepper that she was not inclined to change it for any charms that youth and love could offer. But now she perceived new heights. Gibbs Josselyn's wife would have the world at her feet.

Lillian concerned herself with no details. She left those to others. She simply dwelt upon the thought: Gibbs Josselyn's wife would have the world at her feet.

She was noticeably kind to Ellen in these days. With a sort of dreamy gentleness she would come to lay her hand about Ellen's shoulders, to admire the flowers the younger woman was arranging, or she would pat

the chair next to her chair on the terrace, and when Ellen took it, she would devote herself to the making of congenial plans for the day. Ellen was helpless. She would look wistfully, eagerly, into Lillian's eyes; could there be duplicity there, could there be cruelty there?

". . . and then Tom and I will meet you at the gallery," the rich voice would be saying.

"But, Lillian, why not all lunch together?"

"Oh, we'll let you and Gibbs have your lunch alone: men like to have their wives to themselves sometimes!" How innocent, how sisterly, the amused look she would give Ellen as she said it. Ellen might go upstairs vaguely heartened.

But eventually the cruel apprehensions shut down upon her again. She came to hate the splendid house, to feel that some menace to her and to hers was concealed in the dark, orderly rooms, that the perfect service was not a service of love, but of hate. The beds that were mysteriously made, the meals that were mysteriously prepared, the letters that some unseen hand laid upon her table, the gowns that the always-invisible Keno brushed and mended and laid upon her bed—these things began to stifle her!

Ellen had another trouble in these days. This was a trouble real and vital enough, for it touched Joe. She had taken the sisterly liberty, on a wet October Sunday, to ask him if he and Harriet were still good friends.

"Harriet isn't well, Joe. And her father said something, last week, about taking her to England for the winter. You—you know how I feel about her? I would be so sorry to have things go wrong just because

you hadn't the courage——" her voice faltered nervously. "It isn't the money, is it, Joe?" she added.

He did not answer. He was standing by the fireplace looking sombrely down at the blazing logs. Tommy had been with them, his violin was on the piano, and Ellen still sat on the piano bench, her hands idle in her lap, her anxious eyes on her brother.

"So often it's just the little things that go wrong, Joe," she said. "And then years later people say, 'If only I'd realized that that was my opportunity—and that it wasn't coming back!'——"

"It's not that——" Joe began huskily, and was silent. Ellen waited expectantly, his gravity troubled her. Surely there was nothing seriously wrong? Perhaps Joe had discovered the secret that Harriet had kept from him: that as her mother's heiress she was far richer than her father was. But no, Joe cared too little for money, either way, to let so mythical a thing as a great fortune influence him.

She looked at his troubled face anxiously, waiting in some perplexity to hear him speak.

"Ellen," he said suddenly, and somewhat awkwardly, "I'll tell you about it. I'm—I'm engaged to another girl!"

"You *what?*" his sister asked, blankly.

"I'm trying to tell you that there's another girl—a girl—who—well, she has a right!"

He flushed like a girl himself as he spoke, and avoided her eyes. Scarlet leaped to Ellen's cheeks, and she felt her mouth turn dry.

"Joe! What are you saying! Joe—you can't mean——"

"Yes—yes—yes!" he answered, with a sort of fever-

ish shame. "I do mean that! I'm ashamed to look at you, Ellen—but it's true."

His boyish, rough head went suddenly down on his arm which was resting on the mantel. Ellen stood looking at him, horror and incredulity in her eyes. For a few minutes there was utter silence in the music room. Then in a sorrowful whisper Ellen said, as if to herself:

"Joe! My little brother!"

Standing at the low mantel, Joe did not move, and again there was silence. Again Ellen broke it.

"I always thought it was Harriet," she said sadly, "and I think Harriet did, too!"

"It always was Harriet," Joe said violently. "This —this other thing never had anything to do with that! I've always loved Harriet, always will! There isn't an hour of the day that I'm not thinking of her, thinking what it would mean to have her for my wife! Her father's always been a father to me, Ellen, I couldn't love my own father more! He's counting on it, I know that. He talks to me about what he wants done with the place—about her and her mother —I'm not blind! I know what it means. And then I think of the other—my God, I haven't been able to sleep nights, thinking!"

"Who is she?" Ellen asked sharply, after a pause.

"She's just a—just a girl in the village," he answered, rousing himself from dark musing. "You never met her—they've only lived there two years. It was before I ever thought of marrying any one, Harriet was in college, you were in France—it isn't very easy to explain it to you! I knew it wasn't real love, all the time—and yet I couldn't end it all, somehow——!"

"Was it real—with her?" Ellen asked, as he hesitated. Joe flushed deeply.

"I guess so!" he answered, embarrassed.

"She—she wasn't that sort of a girl?" Ellen asked.

"Oh, my God, no! She hadn't ever had another man friend—she wasn't ever allowed to go to the village dances, even! She—she was a good little girl." Joe sank his head on his arms again.

"You didn't promise marriage, Joe?" Ellen, who was thinking hard, asked anxiously.

"What do you think I am!" he answered, impatiently. "Of course I asked her to marry me!"

Ellen flushed with shame. She had no previous knowledge by which to gauge this affair; she had no idea of the rules. Vague memories of situations in novels drifted through her mind; they all seemed hideous, remote, they seemed to have nothing to do with her good, honest, splendid little brother.

"And she wouldn't?" she asked, uncertainly.

"She—she didn't want to talk about it at all. We never talked about it. I suppose that sounds odd, but it's true. She said that she would never drag me down—or something like that! The—the thing was that when she learned that—when I told her that it was Harriet—then that was the end, for her. I don't think she ever wanted to see me again. She—she acted a little crazy!"

"Oh, poor child!" Ellen said, wincing at the thought. "She didn't know about Harriet, then?"

"Well, yes, she did—all along, in a way. But she seemed to think that we—belonged to each other—in a way——"

Ellen had dropped into a chair, her eyes were sombre.

"Joe—she will spoil your life!"

"Has," he amended simply.

"For this little village girl," Ellen summarized bitterly, in a whisper, "you may lose the woman you really love—your whole future! Joe—Joe—Joe! How could you?"

The man was miserably silent. After a moment Ellen spoke again:

"Who knows about it, Joe?"

"Her mother knows. Nobody else! The mother is a decent sort, the only decent one in the family. She hasn't been unkind to her. Poor girl, nobody could make her feel any worse!"

"Oh, *dear*——!" Ellen's tone was utterly discouraged and despairing.

"She says that she can never marry now," Joe pursued, gloomily, "says she could never look a daughter of her own in the face and tell her! My God, I don't know what to do about it! I've walked the floor, thinking of it, many and many a night!"

Ellen looked up with sudden hope.

"But how do you know that she was good, Joe? Mightn't she be just telling you so——" Her voice lost confidence at his look. "No?" she said, subsiding.

"She's not that kind!"

"Well," Ellen said, feebly, "if she doesn't want you to marry her; if you've offered, and she has refused—I don't see that you can do anything more about it! It isn't even as if you had met Harriet afterward—you always knew, and always loved, Harriet, and you—you owe something to Harriet!"

"I *owed* something to Harriet," Joe admitted, heavily.

"You mean—that you can't ask Harriet, now?" Ellen said, with quick concern and disappointment.

"Well, can I?"

"No, I suppose not!" she conceded, unwillingly. "She would have to know!" For a moment she pondered, with a thoughtful face, then suddenly she brightened. "Joe!" she said, "why don't you go and tell George the whole story? He's so broadminded—and he loves you both—loves us all! If he wanted to take Harriet abroad again, to have some time elapse, at least he'd understand why you couldn't ask her now."

"I—I thought of that!" Joe said, somewhat sharing her confidence.

"Perhaps he'd think it best never to tell Harriet at all," Ellen mused, half-aloud. "There must be thousands of men who never tell their wives something like that."

"Wouldn't *you* mind that?" Joe asked, giving her a shrewd glance.

"I? Oh, I don't know. But, Joe," his sister protested quickly. "It's all wrong, anyway. Whatever we decide, someone's going to be unhappy!" And she fell to thinking, her mind still shocked and confused, her breath coming fast. She felt the utter tensity of the situation; it might mean Joe's misery or happiness for life.

"Joe, dear, I'm sorry!" she said suddenly, coming to his side to lay her arm about his shoulder. "I think I'm sorrier than I ever was before in my life. I wish it might never have been, Joe! I'm sorry for this other girl, too; but there's no way of saving her, anyway. It's the one thing women can't do, and no matter how

hard you try to patch it up, women have got to pay the full price. If she grew up in the village, she must have known what she was throwing away. Dearest boy, I hope I'm advising you rightly. But I think you must do what's best for Harriet, now. She loves you, and you and George must decide how much she shall know. I think he'll forgive you. Men—men feel differently from women about that!"

"Just telling you has made me feel happier than I have for weeks, Ellen!" he said with a long boyish breath of relief. She kissed him, in her grave, motherly fashion, on the forehead, and sighed deeply, with her arms still locked about his neck.

"Will you look at the lovers?" Lillian's good-humoured voice said, from the doorway. She and Gibbs were standing there, Gibbs with impatient and disapproving eyes. But Ellen was too full of the thought of Joe's tragedy to notice him.

"I've been hearing Joe's confession!" she said, nervously smiling.

"And I feel as lighthearted as What's-her-name walking home beneath the murmuring pines and the hemlocks!" Joe said.

Ellen knew that his tone was happier than his mood. Yet confession *had* relieved him of the burden. She bore it now; it was a weight against her heart for many days.

CHAPTER IX

The first heavy rainstorm of the season came early in November, upon a certain Wednesday afternoon. Indian summer was all over now, autumn was gone with its blaze of leaves. Branches about the "Villino dell' Orto" were bare, and the earth under them was packed with the sodden masses that had been a glory of red and gold a few weeks before. In the still, thin air, smoke from wood and leaf fires rose like incense over Wheatley Hills, the mornings were darker, and now for several days the air had been cold, and the sky hung low and dark. Wakening on this particular morning, Ellen, whose constant vigils were beginning to tell upon her health, said to herself wearily that it would be Thanksgiving in two weeks, and wondered where the day would find her. Aunt Elsie had suggested that she and Tommy come to Port Washington for the noonday dinner, going back to Wheatley Hills for the more formal event of the evening. Gibbs, when she mentioned it this morning, approved the idea, saying that he wanted her to do what pleased her best, and he knew that she would really prefer the home day to the long, five-hour strain of "Parsifal," to which he and his father and Lillian meant to go, at the Metropolitan. Ellen's face darkened visibly.

"But if you prefer the opera, why come with us!" Gibbs hastened to say, politely.

His wife did not answer. She did not believe that his

father, who was not very well, would go to the opera. He had expressed a positive dislike for German opera. But Gibbs would buy a third seat, and on Thanksgiving morning there would be the usual hideous pretence of his and Lillian's regret, their offer to give the whole thing up, their departure together in the car——

But there was nothing to say. She was dressed now, and Tommy had come leaping into the room, spilling a box of tacks as he came, and shouting gaily that Lizzie said it—felt—like—snow!

"If you're going to that dinner to-night, Gibbs, do you want me to pack anything?"

"Oh, no, thanks! I've everything at the studio. I think I'll come back late, I'll go in the roadster. I hate to keep Torrens in town loafing about waiting for me, even if Dad and Lillian don't want the big car!"

"Lillian's going to that dinner at the Plaza—Mrs. Wallace. Your father begged off, but she says she *has* to go," Ellen reminded him.

"Oh, so she is! And she stays overnight, doesn't she? Well, if Dad doesn't need the car, I may keep Torrens in then, and drive out after the dinner. I could just as well stay at the studio: I have to be in town to-morrow—but we'll see. Don't worry if I'm not here. Come on, Tom, we're all ready!"

Ellen followed them downstairs, her heart dark with suspicions well in keeping with the foreboding sky and the cold, dull air. When the plans for the day were discussed at the breakfast table, she listened, her tragic gaze moving from her husband's face to Lillian's serene face.

"I wish I could go into town when you do, Gibbs," Lillian said indifferently, giving Tommy the cherry

from her grapefruit, "but I'm not going until late, and Im furious at having to go in at all. I hate the Wallaces, I'm worried about your father's cold, and altogether my dolly is stuffed with sawdust!"

"I suppose we could be rude to them again?" the old man said doubtfully.

"I suppose we couldn't!" she answered, smiling. "No, and I wouldn't have you go in with that cold, either! I'll go in about five, and stay at the Plaza, and have a really nice time, so don't give it another thought! You have to go this morning, Gibbs?"

"Now!" he answered, rising. "I'm painting a lovely society lady, weight three hundred, and a moustache!"

Tommy laughed gaily, danced with his father to the door, and watched until the roadster disappeared down the drive.

The day wore on. At eleven o'clock Lillian, whose woman was shampooing her hair, wandered, with all its glory spread loose over her shoulders, to Ellen's door.

"Snow, Ellen!"

Ellen had been writing, but had stopped, and was staring blindly ahead of her through tear-filmed eyes. She was glad she did not have to face Lillian as she looked out of the window.

"So it is!" she managed to say huskily.

Lillian wandered on, stood in the bathroom door, where Lizzie was working mittens and warm woollen wraps upon the excited Tommy. When she turned back into Ellen's room the younger woman had entirely recovered her self-control.

While they lunched, snowflakes fluttered softly down from a leaden sky. A wind began to whistle about the corners of the house. Outside there was great

emptiness, an appalling silence. Ellen forced herself to settle down with her father-in-law in the study after lunch; the old man seemed supremely happy as she opened "Jean Christophe." He was established in his great chair by the fire, with a plaid over his knees, and interrupted the reading now and then to congratulate himself upon having escaped the necessity of going out that night. But Lillian seemed as restless and nervous as Ellen did.

At four o'clock she came in to say good-bye, exquisite in her furs, and Ellen suddenly decided to try to walk herself into a better frame of mind. She saw Torrens walking about the big car, as she went down the drive, and presently it passed her, and she waved to Lillian in farewell.

It was bitterly cold, and a strong wind was blowing. The snow fell fitfully: the storm was coming, but it was not yet fairly under way. Ellen, usually normal and sensible enough, felt a sense of impending horror close upon her. She did not want to go back to that dreadful house, where selfishness, and deceit, and cruelty flourished.

But she did go back, and sent her wet shoes downstairs by Keno, and slowly got herself into something warm. She went to the study, where just before dinner Josselyn, Senior, joined her. Ellen was almost frantic now with undefined nervousness, her hands were icy cold, her face burned, and when one of the maids dropped a spoon at dinner she gave a sharp little cry. She and her father-in-law were alone at the stately meal.

"Here comes the storm!" he said pleasantly, as a wild assault of wind drove violently against the windows.

"Oh, I wish Gibbs were here!" Ellen exclaimed, with suddenly watering eyes. "Here—or that I were anywhere in the world, with him!" her heart added. She had never been frightened when they were together, storms that had rocked the old studio in Paris had only seemed to emphasize their delicious safety and warmth beside its fire. And there had been a day when he and she were caught in a storm, in Brittany, and had been drenched and blown, and overtaken by the darkness; how she had laughed as he fumbled with big, protecting hands at the collar of her loose cape, and kissed her wet and rosy face!

And to-night where was he, while she went silent and heavy-hearted about this house of shadows and menaces? The thought tormented her like a gnawing pain. Where was he? Who was enjoying the smile she loved so well, the accents of that wonderful voice? She was not beautiful, as Lillian was, she was thin and nervous, and alien to this atmosphere, but she was his wife, after all—she was the same Ellen who had talked with him there at the yacht club, in her pink dress, and given him the freshness and the glory of her youth.

"Oh, I could be pretty again!" she mused, beside the study fire. "I could be gay again! But not here —not here!"

Her book lay idle in her lap, and after awhile, glancing toward him, she saw that her father-in-law was dreaming, too.

"I'm a little worried about Lillian!" he said, as their eyes met. "I'm afraid they had a bad trip!" And the finely groomed old hand was stretched for the telephone. She heard him call the Plaza Hotel, and ask

for Mrs. Bainbridge Wallace. Ellen watched him with a sort of fascination.

"She's not with the Wallaces," he said, in a puzzled tone; "that's odd. They say she telephoned at about six o'clock that she could not reach the city, and was staying with a friend."

Ellen's face was deathly white.

"They're together!" she whispered. And with a gesture as primitive as it was unconscious she wound her hands together, and pressed them to her face. "They're at the studio—together!" she muttered, blindly beginning to pace the room. "Oh, Gibbs—Gibbs——!"

The old man stared at her for a moment in utter bewilderment. Then the slow blood of age crept slowly into his colourless cheek, a hundred half-forgotten episodes rallied to support the new suspicion. His gallantry, his courtesy, his untiring animation and geniality were a deliberately adopted philosophy. He had not been Lillian's husband for eight years without perceiving the real woman beneath the soft and lovely surface. He felt for her at times the angry contempt of a genuine nature forced to treaty with what is false. But her arts had seemed to him so patent, so pitifully childish and apparent, that he had never dreamed——

No, he had never dreamed of Gibbs! And as the thing burst upon him, suddenly confirmed by much that he had seen and heard without understanding, in the last few weeks, he knew what a fool he had been not to foresee exactly this.

"You think they——" he began, clearing his throat. Ellen, recalled to herself in the midst of her frenzy, looked with quick concern upon his suddenly aged face.

"Oh, I don't know!" she said, more quietly. "I don't know anything! But I—I've been thinking about it all day! They may be dining together, and then they will come home late. It seemed to me that they were planning it——" She stopped her restless walk, and came to the side of his chair and knelt down beside it with the endearing penitence of a passionate child. "I may be wrong!" she stammered eagerly, "Lillian may be somewhere else —Gibbs may be at the club dinner! But they *do* meet—they *do* write each other," Ellen went on with trembling lips, and a shaken voice, "and he has changed to me, I don't count with him any more—he's forgotten—he's forgotten——!"

She burst into bitter crying, and the old man fumbled for his handkerchief, and pressed it against her cheek, as she hid her eyes on his shoulder.

After a few moments she freed herself, and went back to her own chair, where she dried her eyes, and managed a watery smile, but did not speak. She felt shaken and exhausted; yet the relief of speaking at last had seemed to lift a weight from her soul.

"I blame myself for this, Ellen," Josselyn, Senior, said presently, in some agitation. He got up, took his pipe from the mantel, filled it, and laid it irresolutely aside. "Well!" he said briskly, "I will think about this, my dear, and we will decide what to do. We will take it in time. We will—take—it—in—time." And now he lighted the pipe, his tone resolute. "It's nearly eleven o'clock, Ellen, and time for you to go to bed. To-morrow——"

They lingered for a moment over their good-nights, and he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"One thing more, Ellen. Will you forgive him?"

Her quick tears came again. Her voice thickened.

"I—I love him. There's nothing to forgive!"

Her father-in-law stared down at her from his greater height as if he saw something admirable in the honest, earnest little face, and the wet blue eyes.

"You are a good woman, Ellen," he said. "Gibbs's mother was just such another! You shall have him back, my dear, and this will all be forgotten. It's the fault of the times, Ellen—but no harm has been done, yet. I'll think about it—I have been talking of going to England, and Lillian seems to want to go. She's like a child: she forgets. Only tell me again that you'll forgive him, Ellen, and be happy again!"

Ellen went up to bed comforted, and undressed while she dreamed of a new life for herself and Gibbs. They would take the little apartment that adjoined the studio, they would be alone again, the old happy atmosphere would be recreated. He loved her, under all this new madness——

Ellen saw herself in her mirror; her cheeks burning, her eyes starry, her loosened cloud of hair framing her thoughtful face. Hope came back, confidence came back, a dimple deepened in her cheek. It was all her foolish suspicion, after all. Gibbs had been at the dinner, and would come home on the midnight train, and turn the electric lights full in her eyes while he gave her a yawning account of the speeches, and tore off his white tie. And Lillian had been—she did not care where Lillian had been!

But when she had jumped into bed, and midnight struck, and one o'clock, and two o'clock, and he did

not come, the anger and doubt returned in double force. The storm was still racketing about the house. Ellen felt cold under her thick blankets. She tossed and turned, locked her arms under her head and stared into the dark, turned and tossed again.

Her father-in-law had disposed of the matter simply and sanely. But suppose she was right, suppose Lillian and Gibbs had really thrown all honour to the winds, were really together to-night, then what? How could she—how could any wife, forgive that? To have his father take away the danger, as she might take matches away from Tommy, proved nothing for him, and solved nothing for her.

And if he and Lillian did not choose to be separated, if their passion had carried them far beyond any plans that she and his father might make——?

The clock struck three; struck four. Ellen felt as if she would never sleep again.

The next morning she surprised Lizzie and Tommy at their early breakfast; she was going into the city. The world was mantled with snow, but the sun had just risen, and Louis, the lad who assisted Torrens, had the little service car at the door, and was confident that he could get Mrs. Josselyn as far as the station.

Just as Ellen was leaving, her father-in-law, also cloaked and gloved, came downstairs. Their heavy eyes met.

"I don't know why I'm going, or what I'm going to do," Ellen said, "I've *got* to go to the studio—and see if they—if he's there. I didn't sleep all night."

"I'll go with you," he said quickly. "I saw Louis come to the door, and I thought you must be going

to town. I'll go, too. Lillian's car may really have gotten into trouble——"

"Or he may have been foolish enough to try to come out in the roadster," Ellen added. They went down the scraped steps together; not another word was exchanged on the drive to the train. It was an early train: commuters were stamping on the snow-tracked platform. Ellen placed herself at a window, and stared blindly out, making no attempt to entertain her companion, who rattled his newspaper with a great show of interest.

The world glittered under the risen sun. Smoke rose straight from a hundred chimneys into the clear air. Ellen saw a woman with a shawl tied over her head, feeding chickens; another woman kissed two bundle-like babies at a gate. The little woman in front of her, in the warm train, was consulting an insignificant-looking, kindly little man about a Christmas list. "The children will go out of their senses when they see it!" Ellen heard her say.

Then they were in the big station; in a taxi-cab. The streets, where languid gangs of men were shovelling snow, went by. Forty-second: Fiftieth: Fifty-ninth. They were at the door.

"You have some explanation of this early trip for Gibbs?" her father-in-law asked suddenly in the lift. She turned to him tortured eyes.

"Oh, yes—toothache," she answered breathlessly, abstractedly.

A second later, outside the studio door, she caught his arm. They stood a moment transfixed. They could hear Gibbs's full, unmistakable voice. A woman's laugh—Lillian's rare laugh, sounded in answer.

Instantly Ellen's companion flung open the door.

Gibbs and Lillian were alone in the studio. Gibbs, in his painting apron, was busy with the wooden screws and cogs that adjusted his big easel. Lillian, bareheaded and wearing a splendid robe of Chinese green, was beside the fire; coffee and rolls were on the little table before her; she was enjoying her breakfast.

CHAPTER X

On a cold clear morning more than a week later Ellen Josselyn came through the garden of the "Villino dell' Orto" with a few late, short-stemmed roses in her hands. Her face was rosy from a long tramp in the bracing, icy air, and her eyes, if serious, wore a contented expression that was new.

Ellen had passed through several phases of violent emotion in the past ten days, like everyone else in the house she had been undergoing tremendous mental adjustments. But more sensible or more adaptable than the others, she had disciplined herself to accept the new order of things. Ellen had the advantage of some preparation, whereas the events of the memorable Wednesday had fallen upon the others like a thunderbolt. She had suspected, doubted, and dreaded, for many heartsick days and weeks before the crisis came, and now, while they all suffered in their separate ways from the shock, Ellen even experienced a desperate satisfaction. It was over: Gibbs loved her no longer, and he knew that she knew it.

For a few days the repetition of this fact gave her an empty, vague feeling, and a sensation of fatigue. She was always tired, and her head felt always confused. *Gibbs loved her no longer.*

Well, what next, then? She had faced terrible things before. The old leather harness, for instance, and the feverish days of pain in the old dining room, by the

air-tight stove. And later winter days, in Paris now, when she had roused in the night to listen for the baby's uneven breathing and had wakened to remember that the crib was gone, that Rose was gone—Rose was gone!

And now she must keep sane, and face these new, strange things. Gibbs, her own husband, loved another woman more than his wife, and Joe, the little brother whose simple, sturdy integrity had seemed to her to shine in so brilliant a contrast to this life of hypocrisies and affectations, Joe had caused misery and harm, and must take a tarnished record into his new life as a husband.

Brooding on these things day and night, yet Ellen forced herself to a certain desperate courage. She dressed herself in her usual scrupulous, quaint way, she made herself walk and read, and enter into Tommy's life. She met Gibbs's stern and moody unresponsiveness with tranquil gravity, with his father alone she was more like her old sunshiny self. Lillian and Ellen barely spoke to each other, except for the unavoidable civilities whose omission would have caused talk among the servants.

Josselyn, Senior, had somewhat withdrawn into himself since the trip to the studio, and had asked his wife to cancel all engagements for a week or two. Lillian amiably obeyed, and after that the silence and chill of hidden anger and suppressed fear fell upon the "Villino dell' Orto." Once George Lathrop came to dinner, and for a few hours the shadow lifted, and now and then Joe came in, perceiving that something was wrong, but assuming, as they were all assuming,

that everything was normal and pleasant between the Josselyns. Otherwise they were alone.

Lillian was bewildered and made a little uneasy by the suddenness with which this change in atmosphere had come about, because, as she told herself a dozen times a day, nothing had happened, after all. When Tom and Ellen had so abruptly entered the studio, on that eventful Wednesday morning, she had been ready with her laughing explanation of her presence there, and she had seen that they accepted it. Lillian was not the woman to be caught unprepared in such a situation.

The smiling greeting with which she had risen to meet them: "Ah, now—you've spoiled it all!" was daunting in its bright sincerity. She had had a kiss for her husband, she had had an arm about Ellen as she elucidated: "Tom, darling, we've been scheming and scheming for a chance to get my picture painted for your birthday—what bad luck brought you in to-day?"

And Gibbs had promptly and concernedly followed her lead.

"And how'd you *get* in, Dad? The car broke down with Lillian yesterday on the Great Neck hill—Torrens got it as far as the service station—did he telephone you?"

"And I had to telephone the Wallaces," Lillian added, wide-eyed, "and Tom, I simply invited myself to stay with old Mrs. Pepper at Great Neck all night. I didn't telephone you because I had this date for an early sitting with Gibbs."

"Take a look at it!" Gibbs said, at the easel. "Awfully rough now, of course! It's just laid in." The old man, studying the canvas, nodded.

"Still, you've caught it!" he said. "Car broke down, eh?"

"No, it was the skidding," Lillian, at her husband's side, also looking at the portrait, explained. "The road was simply lined with cars, Tom. It was snowing hard, you know, and I got terribly nervous. Finally Torrens gave it up, too. He's been talking about the brake, you know, and he was as nervous as I."

She was smiling, eager, garrulous for Lillian.

"So I thought this was my chance to pay a little attention to Mrs. Pepper. We were going to have her over at the house, Tom, you know, and we never did! And Lindsay was there, I thought he had gone to Washington, but he was there, and he had to make an early start for town this morning, so it all fitted in!"

Thus Lillian, readily and innocently. Gibbs, apparently indifferent to the conversation, was squinting at his canvas, rubbing the wet paint with a tentative finger. The old man stood staring at the picture, too, with unseeing eyes. He was heartsick at finding himself, his years and his dignity, forced into this hideous rôle. He knew now that he was being deceived, if not in actual fact, in the underlying motive so much more important than the fact. He knew what simplicity and ingenuousness from Lillian meant. And standing there in the pleasant winter brightness of the studio, with the fire snapping gaily behind him, and his wife's soft hand on his arm, his heart burned with anger and shame.

Ellen had not spoken at all. She stood like a woman of wood beside the fire. Marie, the shrivelled little janitor's wife, hobbling in, piped a query as to whether "Madame Geebs" would have some coffee, too. Ellen

gave her merely a dumb shake of the head for negative. She was afraid she was going to faint. She felt broken, dazed, struck to the heart. It was all a bad dream, Lillian so pleasantly talkative, Gibbs scowling at his work, her father-in-law gallantly struggling to regain his composure after the sudden revulsion of feeling, and herself silent, sick, helpless. Fool that she had been to think that she could convict them! What was she to gain, even supposing the worst to be true, and herself successful in forcing them to confess it! Had the painter, with his clever, bronzed face and his mop of silver hair, ever been anything to her except a cruel and alien figure? Had she ever rested her black head against that loosely hanging linen smock, and felt the delicious strength of that big arm about her?

He was angry now, she said to herself, but it did not seem important. It was too late for anger of his to concern her.

Like a scene in a play, Torrens arrived. He came upstairs to say he had just brought the car from Great Neck. He was full of the accident, concerned to know how Gibbs had managed the small car.

"Roads is filled with cars, Mr. Josselyn. You didn't attempt to get out to Wheatley Hills last night? I never seen the roads so bad——"

"Mr. Pepper managed to get through this morning," Lillian said. Her husband turned to the chauffeur with directions. Gibbs somewhat awkwardly sauntered over to stand beside his wife. In all her own distress she felt a pang of pity that Gibbs should be ashamed and embarrassed.

"It must have been a heavy snow, down there," he offered.

She raised heavy eyes. Her voice was lifeless.

"It was a stormy night. And—and I had a toothache."

Lillian, joining them, was all sympathy. It was arranged that Ellen should go at once to her dentist, and Josselyn, Senior, might finish his paper by the studio fire while the second sitting went on.

"And you must be tremendously surprised when you get the picture, on your birthday!" Lillian said playfully.

Thus began the farce they were still playing. They had all come home together in the car, after a lunch at Sherry's where more than one envious outsider noticed the four handsome Josselyns laughing and chatting together. Gibbs had been full of concern for his wife, and had seen that she was comfortably tucked into bed when she got home. He had gotten her books, magazines, he had brought Tommy in for good-nights, and talked cheerfully to his wife, while he undressed the child by the fire. And Ellen, watching him, had been afraid that she would suddenly scream out, and go mad.

She loved him so—she loved him so—her big, clever, masterful Gibbs! She had loved him since the hour they met, and she could not unlove him now. She longed, with unceasing hunger gnawing at her heart, to have him her own again, to have his laughter, his confidences, his moods all for her. Ellen was not proud. She had told him a thousand times, in their happy years, that her life and her being were bound up in him; she could not change because he had changed.

Tommy's prayers were said—Tommy's good-night kiss

given—and all the while she knew—she knew that Gibbs was longing, longing to get downstairs, to meet Lillian for the one minute, for just the necessary second, that should reassure them both, that should equip them for fresh play-acting.

And she knew he was not happy, that he never could be happy again in the old way—nor in the new way, either! As surely as the day would come when Lillian would give herself to him; and Ellen said feverishly to herself that it might already have been—so surely would the day come when he would read that cold and cruel heart of hers aright, and would shudder away from it in utter sickness of soul.

There had been a difference in Ellen since that morning in the studio, a calmness and a desperate resignation. And the expected reproaches from Gibbs had never come, rather he had seemed to try to soothe and reassure her. Such an attitude a month ago might have saved them all, but Ellen was past that now. She baffled and shocked him by the depth of her despair.

To his father, too, the whole world was changed. Josselyn, Senior, had aged ten years in this week. His pride was pierced in a vital spot. He had liked his position as elder in this houseful of brilliant young persons; he had admired Gibbs, Lillian, and Ellen, in their separate spheres, and had liked nothing so much as to make them happy, to be the power that could indulge and please them untiringly.

Now accepting their ready explanations in the same spirit that Ellen did, he was awakened from the fool's dream. He saw himself an old man, gulled and blinded, put off with empty caresses. He saw himself bringing untold suffering upon Ellen by his sentimental dream

of having the younger family beneath his rooftree. He saw her life ruined, his boy's life ruined, his own old age dishonoured. Of Lillian he thought little: for many years he had realized that whoever might pay for his second wife's delinquencies, it would not be his second wife. There was no punishing Lillian; her heart was like a mirror that could give her back only a reflection of her own charms.

And yet, of them all, during this strange week, it was Lillian who was really enduring the severest mental discomfort. For Lillian, discomfort of any sort was new, and she tried a hundred times to writhe away from her apprehensive thoughts.

For although it had been perfectly true that Lillian on the night of the storm had gone to seek unexpected hospitality from old Mrs. Pepper at Great Neck, the fact she had successfully concealed from her husband was that Mrs. Pepper at this time had been making a long visit to her daughter in Montreal. Lindsay Pepper, keeping bachelor quarters with his Japanese boy, had welcomed her, and Lillian, resting and warming herself by his fire, after her adventures, had assured him gaily that he must find her a chaperone before dinner-time, or somehow, anyhow, she must get back to Tom, and the "Villino dell' Orto."

While Ellen, restless and suffering, had been wandering about the house at Wheatley Hills, and while Gibbs, thinking perhaps of Lillian's coming in the morning, had been dressing for his dull dinner at the club, Lillian had been experiencing her own uneasiness, too. Lindsay's devotion to her she had never questioned; it was one of the elements in her life with which her fancy liked to play, but she realized now that

she had never truly estimated its depth and its power.

The storm was gathering in fury, and the friends to whom Lindsay was duly telephoning, one after another, regarded his gay suggestion of "getting together for a party" as something little less than mad. Finally, he had to face her ruefully with the simple summary: "Nothing doing!"

There was left them the alternative of struggling out into the storm, fighting their way for more than a bitter mile to the station, getting into the city by eight o'clock, when Lillian, wet and blown, might still join the party at the Plaza, leaving Lindsay to dine and amuse himself otherwise as his fancy dictated. And had Lillian foreseen the events of the following morning, she would certainly have adopted this course at any sacrifice.

But his house was delightfully warm, and Kioto's dinner was already dispensing a delicious odour. No one need ever know that his mother had not chaperoned this affair, the Japanese was discretion's self, and Lillian was no girl to be fluttered by a touch of the unexpected. More, she began to enjoy the almost forgotten emotion of terrified pleasure, the situation was full of theatrical beauty, and she herself was the leading woman. She borrowed a richly embroidered mandarin coat which Pepper sometimes wore about the house, and came downstairs a vision of marvellous beauty. It was not only pleasantly exciting; it was the easiest thing to do. And Lillian, above all things, loved ease.

And then had come the early trip into town, for Lindsay was leaving for Montreal, to bring his mother

home, and Lillian had to keep her engagement with Gibbs. Lindsay was all devotion; this attitude, in fact, was the one element in the matter of which Lillian had taken no account. He alarmed her with the vehemence of his affection, and made her nervous and uncertain. She had supposed that he would leave her at the studio door, but instead he came upstairs, and the two men talked together a few minutes.

During this time Lillian experienced exquisite uneasiness. Gibbs showed a disconcerting familiarity with old Mrs. Pepper's movements. When had she gotten back? How did she find Montreal?

"I didn't know you knew old Mrs. Pepper so well?" Lillian said, when Lindsay was gone.

"Oh, I see her sometimes, watching the tennis," he answered carelessly. "Now take your wraps off, and I'll have Marie bring you in some coffee!" Her big fur coat in his arms, he caught up her bare hand. "No ring?" he smiled.

For he was painting her in a dull green robe, and the big jade ring she frequently wore was an excellent bit of colour in the picture.

If she had had the quickness to say that she had left it at home! But Lillian was not quick at best, and just now she was tired and confused. She had left it on the washstand in the bathroom next to Mrs. Pepper's room; she remembered its exact position, and she said that she would write Mrs. Pepper at once, and ask her to return it.

"Well, run along, and get into your rig!" Gibbs said unsuspiciously. But when she had disappeared into the little model's room, and when Marie had brought in the coffee, and when he had loitered about

waiting idly, and still she did not come, he picked up the telephone book. As well to settle the matter quickly: the delay of a few hours might mean that the ring was swept carelessly away and lost.

And so it was Gibbs's turn to have his castle of dreams fall about him in ashes. When Lillian came innocently back from the model-room, eager for the exquisite hour they had both been anticipating for days, he saw for the first time the woman she really was.

"Your ring's all right," he said presently. "I telephoned. The Jap—said he'd found it."

Her eyes flew to his face. She saw what he knew, and her colour faded a little.

"Gibbs," she said quickly and breathlessly. "You know how it happened—I wanted to tell you all about it, anyway. But Lindsay asked me not to. You see, it was storming horribly——"

Beautiful, eager, in her green robe, she poured out the story as she had arranged and adapted it in the night. And slowly mixing the colours on his palette, not meeting her eyes, Gibbs listened. There was a certain shade of yellow-brown that would always speak to him of this hideous moment, with its blare of brassy truth, and its taste of ashes. When she ended, with a wide-eyed, innocent appeal, he smiled, and still with averted eyes, he nodded. "Blame you? No-o-o, I don't blame you, Lillian!" he said gently, after a silence.

"But smile at me, Gibbs," she said, with an uneasy laugh and a rather uncertain resumption of her old confident manner. "Or I'll have to come over there and make you smile!"

Before he could speak again the door was opened by her husband.

She knew that in the moment he had realized her deception about Lindsay Pepper she had come close to losing Gibbs. She felt a contempt for the weakness in herself that had permitted her to risk the love of the man she really desired for the old admirer who had lost, by contrast with the new, any power to stir her. But Lillian could not think that Gibbs would not return to her. He was hurt, he was sore and angry now, but she had still, as a weapon, their dangerous propinquity and she had still the disturbing and appealing beauty he had found irresistible.

So Lillian played her game safely, and bided her time. This storm would blow over, as other storms had. She would need only a little patience, she would need caution. Patience and watchfulness were among Lillian's virtues.

But Gibbs knew that it was all over. He had made a fool of himself, for her, he had told himself that it was only a pretty and exciting game. He had lived in the light of those dark and magnificent eyes, he had thrilled to the touch of her smooth, warm hand.

That he had never actually been false to Ellen was of small comfort to him now. The house of cards had fallen about him through no heroic measure of his own. He had placed himself in an undignified, in a ridiculous position, he had let her deceive him with the rest.

And with the revelation that she had, from sheer good-natured laziness, placed herself under Lindsay Pepper's roof for the night, and with the bitter thought that Lindsay's coarse devotion meant quite as much

to her insatiable appetite for admiration as did his own exquisitely expressed friendship, Gibbs's wakening had come.

He could not bear to look at her now, to speak to her. He fell into a mood of angry silence; his father's attitude of watchfulness, Ellen's voiceless question and reproach, and Lillian's tireless efforts to reëstablish the old order of things, alike infuriated him.

CHAPTER XI

As ELLEN came in with her roses, the big clock in the hall began to chime in a leisurely manner, and, glancing at it, she saw that it was twelve o'clock. Long afterward Ellen Josselyn thought of that moment, and of the events that would stamp themselves on her heart and brain before the clock chimed for another noonday. But at the time she only reflected that luncheon was in half an hour, and she was muddy and dishevelled: she would put the roses in the study, and fly upstairs to brush and change. Very often she carried flowers into the study: the maids were not allowed to enter the room, and the old man liked to find traces of his daughter-in-law's affection waiting there.

More than that, Ellen thought, Tommy was frequently to be found there at this hour, setting up his grandfather's chessmen, wasting large sheets of paper with his ruler and pencils, operating the little ivory stork that lighted cigarettes, burning incense in the tiny Cantonese out of whose open mouth thick fumes presently poured, and in general enjoying himself almost as much as did the grandfather who superintended these operations. A picture of them together was in Ellen's mind as she opened the door, and she half-smiled in anticipation.

But only Lizzie was in the study. She was standing, pale and staring, by the table, facing the door. She gave a little cry, helpless and forlorn, as Ellen came in.

Ellen's eyes flashed to her limp fingers, which lay about the beautiful shining body of a revolver on the table.

Before the little cry, half-protest and half-whine, had died away, Ellen had sprung at her, wrenched the terrible thing free, and flung it back into its place in the drawer, pushed her own body against the drawer to close it, and caught Lizzie by the shoulders, forcing the girl to face her. While they stood there, panting, the shadow of death lifted itself slowly from the room. The fire crackled, the sunlight, pouring through green bottle-ends, fell peacefully upon the soft tones of rugs and leather chairs.

"Lizzie—my child!" Ellen said, in a sharp whisper. "What were you doing? What were you going to do?"

No need to answer. Lizzie attempted none. She hung her head: her breath came on childish dry sobs.

Ellen's thoughts raced. There was only one explanation of this: Lizzie was "in trouble." Ellen had noticed tear-stains about the pretty eyes more than once. She remembered now that Lizzie's mother, a village woman, had come all the way to Wheatley Hills one day, in a plumber's delivery van, to hold a mysterious but violent conversation with the girl, who had cried bitterly. Afterward, she had explained to Ellen that Ma wanted her to get married, and Ellen had wisely observed that she was right not to take that step until she felt ready for it.

So *that* was it. This gentle, conscientious little woman had been carrying that burden in her heart.

Ellen made the girl sit down on the great seat by the fire, and sat down herself beside her. She kept one kindly hand on Lizzie's shoulder, and fixed anxious

eyes upon the tear-wet, sullen face. The older woman still felt herself to be frightened and shaken, but her tone was as quiet as she could make it.

"Lizzie—my dear! That was a wicked thing to do. Can't you tell me about it? You know Tommy loves you, and I love you. Tell me——"

The tone entirely melted poor Lizzie, whose breast began to heave painfully. Ellen thrust her handkerchief into the girl's hand, and Lizzie sobbed unrebuked, wrenching her whole body in her grief, and making stifled sounds like a person strangling.

"It's about that man your mother wanted you to marry?" Ellen suggested, after awhile, her arm still about Lizzie's shoulders. The girl nodded without looking up. "And Lizzie, *should* you marry him?" Ellen ventured.

"I *love* him!" Lizzie answered, in a choked and angry voice, after a shamed pause.

"You love him—— You poor child! And he wants to marry you?"

"He says he will." Lizzie had writhed about so that her back was almost turned to Ellen, who had to bend forward to catch a glimpse of the flushed face and inflamed eyes.

"And don't you think you would be happier," Ellen pursued sweetly, "don't you think you would be happier, if he loves you, and you——"

"He *don't* love me," Lizzie interrupted sullenly.

"But you said——"

"I said he'd marry me!"

The blood came to Ellen's face, and she sat back, feeling a little sick. She had read of the old tragedy a thousand times, but how much more poignant was this

first encounter with it, this sickening realization of what it means to the woman to sue! She had loved, and she had given, and now it was his royal prerogative to lift her up, and make her "honest," or to drive her to self-murder. Ah, life was hard enough for the Ellens, who keep a man's respect, but lose his love. But for the Lizzies——!

"Lizzie," she asked timidly. "Are you—you're not——?"

Lizzie had dried her swollen eyes, and their misery was turned toward Ellen.

"No, ma'am," she answered, with returning self-control, "if there was a baby coming, I'd marry him to-morrow. But he—he's a good man, Mrs. Josselyn, and he'd never be anything but shamed and kept down by a girl like me. And we done what we done like children might do something wrong," poor Lizzie added, with her eyes brimming again, "and all the time he was in love with another lady—I knew he was, but he didn't know himself how he had come to think about her—and so when we—when we said we wouldn't see each other no more, I thought that it was all over and done with—except for the way I felt. But—but Ma guessed it, and she was awful mean to me," the girl said simply, "and nothing ever seemed right again. I didn't want to go with any of the other boys, and I kep' feeling what if I should marry some day, and have a little girl——"

She began to cry again softly. Ellen, whose face had grown ashen, sat staring at her blindly. Her heart was pounding: her brain in a whirl. She had heard those terms before—Lizzie had been Aunt Elsie's maid through an illness last winter——

"When was this, Lizzie?" she asked, clearing her throat.

"Last winter, Mrs. Josselyn."

"Look at me," Ellen said, after a pause. "Look at me, Lizzie. Was it Joe? Was it Mr. Latimer?"

She saw the answer in Lizzie's eyes before the girl said quickly:

"No, ma'am! Oh, no, ma'am!"

Ellen could smile sadly as she shook her head.

"He told me about it, Lizzie. He told me all about it, but he didn't say it was you. I'm so sorry. I'm so desperately sorry. You—you do love him?"

"Oh, my God, how could I help it?" the girl answered, with sudden violence. "I had never worked before, Mrs. Josselyn, and at home it was trouble—trouble—trouble! My father drinks and my sister's husband drinks—I've seen him hit her a few days before her children come! And your aunt was so good to me, and the Captain treated me like I was his granddaughter, and everything was so pleasant and warm. And Joe always anxious for me to get enough to eat, and helping me with kindling and all, and one night tying up my finger where I'd cut it, and sometimes he'd kiss me, you know, and tell me I looked nice! And then one night he wasn't coming home, and the Captain wanted some tobacco, and I run up street for it, after supper, and when I come back my feet were all sopping, and after I'd undressed, I come down in a wrapper, to get warm——"

Ellen could see the old Main Street house. Her eyes were shining.

"I've done that a thousand times!" she said, half-aloud.

"And Joe come in," pursued Lizzie, "it was after nine, but he hadn't had his supper. And him and me went out and got something to eat——"

Her voice fell. Ellen did not speak.

"He's going to marry Miss Lathrop," Lizzie said presently. "But that can't stop me loving him, and remembering how he'd laugh when we was building the breakfast fire—and how I felt about him! I thought then we might get married, although I always knew it wouldn't be right for Joe—and she's rich, and all that, and—and of course he loves her——"

She stopped speaking, staring drearily ahead of her. Ellen was silent, too. But she kept one warm friendly little hand tight over Lizzie's hand, and in her troubled face there was no hint of reproach.

"You say he loves her," she said thoughtfully after awhile, "I think he does, too, in a way. But he has been most unhappy about this, Lizzie; I've seen it, only I didn't understand. He has been worried and uncertain—we've all been wondering what was on his mind. And I didn't understand. I thought it was some reckless girl—I suppose it's always this way. Only I never thought of you, Lizzie, so quiet and good and unselfish—no, don't begin to cry again. I didn't mean that unkindly. I blame myself—I blame myself——"

Thus Ellen, reaching for some guiding principle through all these mazes.

"Well! Someone will come in and find us here," she said, with sudden decision. "Go upstairs and bathe your eyes, Lizzie, and get Tommy ready for lunch. And don't worry, I'm going to think it all out!"

Comforted, the girl escaped, and Ellen ate her lunch

in thoughtful mood, and afterward walked with Tommy to the station a mile away. She said nothing to any one at the house, but when they were on the road, she told Tommy that they were going to meet Uncle Joe.

"How 'j' know he was comin'?" Tommy demanded.

"I telephoned him, dear." Ellen was excited: she trotted Tom's small legs along in a spirited fashion. Joe, descending from the train, complimented them upon their cheeks.

"Of course you don't understand," Ellen echoed his greeting as she kissed him. "But I'll explain, Joe. I didn't bring the car because I want to talk to you, by myself. Trot ahead there, Tom. It's about Lizzie, Joe."

His honest, kind eyes flew to hers consciously.

"She told you?"

"She was going to kill herself, Joe."

He walked along at her side for ten paces without speaking.

"My God—my God!" he said then, under his breath. And after another silence he said suddenly and firmly: "I'm sorry, Ellen. I know how you and Gibbs will feel. But I can't stand it any longer. Perhaps other men can do it: I can't. I'm going away —get a job somewhere—and she's going with me. It's the only way, for me. She's a better woman than I am a man, because she gave herself where she loved. I thought I'd cut everything, and get out for awhile, but now I see that this is the way out. I'll go, and I'll take Lizzie. We'll go *now*. I'll make it up to Lizzie, somehow!"

"Oh, Joe, I love you!" Ellen said, tears and laughter in her voice. "I think that's the only way out! I know that you'll be glad some day."

Half an hour later she sent Lizzie out to the gate on some pretext, and Lizzie did not come back for almost two hours. When she did come, Ellen was playing with Tommy, and Tommy's stone blocks, on the nursery table.

"Mrs. Josselyn," Lizzie said, coming close to her, and laying one hand on Ellen's arm, "I hope God will make up to you what you done for me. I don't deserve you should treat me like this—but I'll never forget it! Mrs. Josselyn, we've been talking—and he's just gone down to get the four o'clock train—and he says we are to be married. And if God helps me—if God helps me—I'll make him the best wife——!"

And Lizzie, turning her back suddenly, began to cry again. But Ellen knew that these were tears of joy. Her own mood was the more sober of the two as she went slowly to her own room. The right thing is not always the easy thing, she mused apprehensively.

Now she must face Gibbs with this extraordinary news. And Gibbs, intolerant of Joe always, would find in this a complete confirmation of his poor opinion of the younger man. George Lathrop's dearest dream shattered, Harriet and a fortune flung aside, and Joe and a village girl, ungrammatical and unlettered, off to be married; the summary was disheartening indeed. And yet under all her uneasiness Ellen's heart was singing with the joy of a decision wisely made, and a hard step bravely taken.

She left Lizzie tremulously smiling, and building Tommy such a tower as never had gladdened his eyes before, and went downstairs to the study. Her father-in-law was alone there, dreaming over a fire and a book, and smiled as she came in. Lillian had gone off with

Mabel Pointdexter for dinner, he explained, and would be there all night. Ellen, seating herself, seemed to feel a certain lightening in the atmosphere with Lillian's departure. Presently Gibbs came in, silent and gloomy, to find them having tea. He declined Ellen's brief, civil offer with equal brevity and cold civility. He answered his father's questions, delivered dryly, with patient monosyllables, and followed his wife upstairs to make himself presentable for the informal dinner.

In their room, Ellen nervously broached the subject of Lizzie. He was surprised, but his comments amazed her with their mildness, and be brought a pang of strange, unfamiliar pleasure to her heart by his final summary:

"I think you did right. Joe's not the first man who has made a fool of himself, but they may hit it off, after all. She's just as apt to make him a good wife as that empty-headed little Harriet. I respect him for doing it."

Ellen, sitting at her dressing table, felt a wave of happiness, almost weakening in its intensity, pass over her. To have him approve her again—to have the ice of the past months show the least break——

He was sitting by the fire. Now, glancing at him through her mirror, she saw him drop his head into his hands.

"Money!" she heard him say moodily. "What good would it do him? What good has it done any of us? I wish to God we had never come here! I wish to God we had stayed in Paris!"

Why did they go downstairs earlier than usual that night? Ellen never could remember. She remembered

that they had not dressed, and that at about six o'clock she was following Gibbs down the wide, open stairway, when his father came across the lower hall toward them. The old man held the evening paper that Gibbs had brought from the city, in his hand, Ellen, on the landing, stopped short, aghast at the dark, angry suffusion of blood in his face.

"Look here just a minute, will you, Gibbs?" his father said in a shaking voice. His effort to control it gave it almost the effect of a shriek. Gibbs ran down the last stairs, and joined him at once, bending over the paper as his father brought it to his attention. Ellen, standing where she was, and looking down upon them, felt herself beginning to tremble.

Gibbs read the indicated lines and faced his father. He seemed to tower over the old man.

"Well, what about it?" he asked at length, after a frightful silence. The two were measuring each other like wrestlers, Gibbs's eyes hard and angry, his father's look the soul of all that was suspicious and revengeful.

Ellen did not hear the old man's answer, which came in a quick, furious undertone, nor what he said again, after Gibbs had made an ugly response. Their faces were close together, and they looked straight into each other's eyes as they spoke. The sound of their tense, harsh voices, in this beautiful hall of so many perfect silences, seemed to Ellen full of sudden terror and menace.

"You're telling a deliberate falsehood!" she heard the old man snarl, and something was added to which Gibbs answered, in a measured, grating voice: "You shall not say that! By God, *no* man shall say that to me!"

And suddenly the dignified custom of the years dropped from both, and they were like two hairy denizens of some primeval forest ready to spring and rend. The storm had come so suddenly, and from so clear a sky, that Ellen had had no time to run for help, no time to think. She stood where she was, one hand gripping the carved dark wood of the rail, the other pressed against her heart.

"Oh, don't!" she whispered, unheard. "Oh, what is it?"

She caught the words ". . . you hound . . . you liar! Betraying your own father . . . lying your way out of it like a common . . .''! and then everything was unintelligible again until Gibbs, hoarse with passion, shouted suddenly:

"I'll *stop* you, by God! I'll kill you before I'll listen to you! . . . I'll *stop* you . . .!"

"Oh, no, Gibbs!" she half-sobbed, from the landing, seeing the threatening gesture. In the same instant the old man groped blindly for an ivory scimetar that lay on the hall table, a beautiful thing supposedly a book-knife, but measuring some two feet in length, and very heavy.

Then suddenly it was all over. Silence fell in the hall, and cutting through it Ellen heard the gasp of a maid. Torrens and some of the girls had come running in.

Gibbs, with an ugly sneering smile on his lips, stumbled back, clearing with his hand a flowing skin-wound in his forehead. His face, under the trickling red, was ghastly. The old man, steadying himself with one hand on the table, stood panting and staring wildly at him.

"By God, you ought to be killed . . . my mother's name . . . a fight like this!" Gibbs spoke thickly, his breast heaving. "If any other man had said that . . ."

"You get out of my house!" the old man answered, in a quivering whisper. "Get out of my house—do you hear?"

"I'll get out of your house!" his son answered bitterly. As he strode toward the big closet the maids murmured and drew back from him. "I'll get out and I'll take my wife and child to-morrow!" he said surlily.

"Gibbs, dear!" Ellen had run down the stairs, and was clinging to his arm. "Gibbs, dear, it's your father! Don't speak so!"

He took her hand from his arm, but not roughly, and for a moment looked at her vaguely. He had taken an overcoat from the closet, and had his cap in his hand.

"Gibbs, you'll come back!" she begged urgently as he turned toward the door. "When you're cooler, Gibbs—you mustn't quarrel with your father——"

She saw that in the whirl of his passion he could not hear her, or could not understand her. But at the door he seemed suddenly to notice Torrens, and he turned back.

"Here's your chauffeur," he said bitingly, to his father. "Why don't you ask *him* where your wife was that night? Why don't you ask him whether he left her in Great Neck, or whether she took a train for the city? You remember the night of the storm, Torrens: where did you leave Mrs. Josselyn that night?"

"I took her to Mrs. Pepper's house in Great Neck.

sir," the man said, eager and uneasy, "Before we laid the car up, we went there, sir."

Gibbs gave one last look at his father, shrugged his shoulders, and was gone. The noise of the slamming heavy door died away, and there was silence. The maids stood grouped together at the dining-room door, their eyes terrified. Josselyn, Senior, was still keeping one fine old hand on the table for support, his eyes fixed unseeingly upon a spot on the floor a few feet away, his head hanging.

Ellen was the first to move. She gave the maids a quick look that dismissed them, and went to put her arm about the old man's shoulders.

"Come into the study," she commanded him, as if he had been Tommy. She was trembling herself and her heart was beating violently. This burst of primitive fury, this rending of all the careful structure of years, had left her shaken and shocked. "Smiles and politeness and explanations for years," thought Ellen, "and then suddenly—this!"

The old man sank into a chair by the fire and leaned wearily back with closed eyes. For a while they were silent: Ellen, watching her father-in-law anxiously, saw that he was breathing more evenly, and gradually regaining his self-control.

"I struck him, Ellen—I struck him!" he said suddenly, resting his head in his hands, and his elbows on his knees. He looked old, and strangely broken. "I saw it in that accursed paper," he went on, "that Lindsay Pepper and his mother had gotten back yesterday from visiting the sister, in Montreal. And it all came over me in a flash—— I thought he and Lillian had made the lie up between them."

"But you remember that Torrens, that very morning in the studio, said that he had just come in from Great Neck," she said soothingly.

"I'd forgotten it!" he answered, stricken.

"I know how Gibbs feels about Lillian," Ellen said gravely, in a low tone. "But Gibbs wouldn't do that! Oh, no, I know he wouldn't!" she added, half to herself. And as he gave her a miserable look, everything that was sane and motherly in her came to the surface. "Now, let's not worry about it," she said cheerfully. "Gibbs was too angry to be reasonable, but I begged him to come back, and I know that as soon as he's worn off some of his temper, he will. Then you can explain it to him: it isn't," Ellen added innocently, "it isn't as if he *hadn't* rather lost his head over Lillian, you know, he has something to blame himself for there!"

"You've known it all along," Josselyn, Senior, commented thoughtfully, with a shrewd look.

"Oh, yes! I've seen it."

"And how much does he care about her, do you think?"

Ellen flushed, and managed a smile, before she answered bravely:

"Oh, she fascinated him, I think, from the first. I don't know——" Her voice dropped wearily. "He'll come back, and he'll be sorry for this quarrel," she added, after a silence. "And you'll forgive him, won't you?"

"I struck him," the old man repeated sombrely. "I don't know how I ever came to do a thing like that. Yes—yes," he added sadly. "We must make it up —my boy and I. I never should have brought you

both here—a man is dull about such things. Well! We'll make it up: and you and he shall start fresh somewhere——"

"Dinner, Mrs. Josselyn," said Florence in the doorway, rather timidly, breaking a few minutes of silence in the study.

"I think I'll not dine——" the old man began quickly. But Ellen went to him with a smile.

"Indeed you'll dine!" she decreed. "And, Florence, go see if Tommy has had his dinner. If he has not, tell Lizzie I said he might dine with us. You'll feel very differently," she said to her father-in-law, as they went toward the dining room, "when you've had some hot soup, and perhaps Gibbs will come back in time for some coffee!"

Tommy came rioting down the stairs, explaining that he had had some dinner, but would like some more, and the three shared the meal with great serenity. Indeed to Ellen the air seemed clearer for the storm, or perhaps it was the pleasant absence of Lillian; and Lillian's perfumed and smiling insincerities.

After dinner she and Tommy went with Josselyn, Senior, into the study, and even after Tommy was in bed Ellen ran down again for a few friendly words of good-night. She pleaded a headache as an excuse for going upstairs almost immediately after the little boy, but as a matter of fact, it was excitement rather than distress that made Ellen long for the quiet of her own fire to-night.

When Lizzie had gone to bed, Ellen sat on, thinking. Lizzie came in, to stand beside the fireplace, and talk to her, half-shamed, half-shy, but yet with a certain great happiness in her face. And as Ellen drew

from her the story of the sordid home, the drink and dirt and laziness, the unwelcome babies, the lack of courage, self-control, kindness, of everything that makes life worth while, she marvelled at the world that could accept Lillian, and cast Lizzie out as a sinner.

She had a book, but she could not read it. Thoughts of the long day would interpose themselves between her and the page. Now she was talking to Lizzie again, now walking through the wet roads to meet Joe. And Gibbs had not been unfavourable, had even been negatively approving, of their marriage. Lizzie, Joe's wife! It was a strange turn of events. And yet it seemed to give Ellen back her little brother again. She had vaguely visualized that injured village girl, had made her a coarse girl, perfumed, rouged, and loud of voice. She was glad to dismiss this girl from her thoughts forever, and put grieving, patient, silent little Lizzie in her place. He could not ask a truer and kinder and more devoted wife. And it was right, after all. There was not much to fear from that course.

And then she remembered the quarrel, herself innocently following Gibbs downstairs, and being arrested on the landing by the frightening, rough voices. How strange they had sounded, how hideously alarming this unexplained and sudden animosity!

"Now we *will* go away," Ellen thought, in deep satisfaction. For even though Gibbs became reconciled to his father, he would no longer live in the "Villino dell' Orto." He would take Ellen and Tommy to some little apartment—a sunny kitchen—and the old hilarious breakfasts——

Ten o'clock. Ellen roused herself from a golden

dream, and began to prepare for bed. She stepped into the next room for a good-night look at Tommy. Lizzie, in the narrow bed beside his short, square bed, was asleep, too, her relaxed little sensitive face wearing a smile as childish as Tommy's own. Before she got into her own bed, Ellen put out her lights, and stood at the window, looking out at the dark, cold night.

It was sharply clear, the stars shining coldly. Against the bare shrubs at an angle of the house she could see the dull green light that filtered from the bottle-end windows of the study, and far across the hills there was another light, the country club, where Gibbs perhaps had dined. Ellen left a shaded light for him; before the clock struck eleven she was sound asleep.

Yet she was too tired and excited to sleep deeply, and it seemed to her that she had been waking and tossing a long time when a slight but definite sound awakened her, and she sat up in bed. The night light was still burning, and the fire had been coaxed into fresh life. It was after two o'clock. Gibbs, still dressed, was sitting staring at the coals.

"Gibbs!" she said bewilderedly.

He got up, and as he came to the side of the bed she saw that his hair was tossed about in disorder, and his face strangely pale. The cut on his forehead looked ugly and swollen, and his manner was agitated and stern.

"Look here, Ellen," he said quickly. "We get out of here to-morrow morning, do you understand? I'm done with this house. I'll not stay here an unnecessary hour, do you see?"

"Why, certainly, dear, I'll go anywhere—whatever you say!" she said soothingly. For a few minutes he stood looking at her gloomily, then his face softened.

"You're a good little thing, Ellen!" he said gruffly. The quick tears sprang to her eyes as he turned away; she saw him through the glittering haze of them. He did not speak again, as he undressed, and Ellen, leaving all talk of reconciliation and all planning until the morning, and with a lighter heart than she had had for many weeks, fell asleep again.

CHAPTER XII

ELLEN awakened to find Gibbs swiftly packing. His manner discouraged any attempt she might have made to soften him; far better to give him his way while this unfamiliar and terrifying mood lasted. She went into the nursery and found Lizzie packing, too, she and Tommy had had breakfast, and the child was wild with excitement. They were going to Dad's studio, and Marie was going to cook for them, and they were going to get an apartment somewhere near. Ellen, dressed, went back to Gibbs.

"Aren't you going to eat any breakfast, dear?"

"No, thank you!"

"Gibbs—but you'll say good-bye to your father?"

He made no answer, strapping shirts into the lid of his suitcase.

"What train do we take, Gibbs?"

"I'll start in the roadster *just* as soon as you're ready. We take Tommy, and Lizzie can follow by train."

"I'll wait—and have breakfast with you, in the studio," Ellen said, opening her own bureau drawers, and thoughtfully selecting linen.

"I ask you—*as a favour*—to go down and get something to eat!" he answered sharply.

Instantly she obeyed. But passing him, she laid her hand pleadingly on his arm, and he put his arms about her.

"Don't be cross with me, Gibbs! I'm so sorry——"

"Cross with you!" he echoed penitently. "Who could be cross with you! No, but I'm nervous, Ellen—I won't be happy until we get away! Just help me out, all you can——"

"I will!" she answered. And her heart sang as she went downstairs. In an hour she and Tommy and Gibbs would be in the car, speeding away from this unnatural atmosphere. Gibbs would not be reconciled now, but after a few quiet days he would forget his present anger, she knew. And she would say good-bye to her father-in-law, and beg him to be patient with Gibbs. She ate her fruit, and drank a cup of coffee, shaking her head as Florence came in with an omelette.

"Nothing more, Florence. Has Mr. Josselyn had his breakfast yet?"

"No, Mrs. Josselyn. He is in the study, I think. At least Mollie said she saw the light there when she started the breakfast fire, before sunrise."

"So early?" Ellen got up. "He must have had a bad night," she added. "Hasn't he rung for any coffee?"

"No, Mrs. Josselyn. You know he doesn't like the girls to interrupt him there, so Katie didn't go in——"

"I know he doesn't," Ellen smiled. "But he doesn't mind me!" And turning over in her mind the exact phrases with which she meant to bid him good-bye, she went to the study.

Sunlight was coming in through the bottle-green windows now, but the lights were lighted, and gave a garish look to the place. Cold ashes had drifted to the hearth. The air was stale and dull. Ellen felt her breath taken away with a swift impulse of fear. Her father-in-law was sitting by the fireplace in his

favourite chair. He did not turn as she came in, and she spoke to him, using the name he liked, from her:

"Dad? Dad—aren't you well?"

Her voice died into silence. She went to his side, and touched his arm. Then she knew that he was dead.

"He's fainted, that's all!" she said aloud. But her own voice frightened her and she stood there for a few minutes, rooted to the spot with horror and shock, staring at the fallen gray head and the still hands. Then she backed slowly from the room, and ran wildly back to the dining room.

"Florence—Mr. Josselyn is very ill—he's—telephone for Doctor Cutter, will you? And—and telephone for Mr. Lathrop—I'm going up to get Mr. Gibbs——"

"My God, Mrs. Josselyn, oughtn't we get him to bed?"

Florence, a sensible gray-haired woman of fifty, had her arm about Ellen now, and was holding a glass of ice-water to her lips.

"No—no use!" Ellen whispered, staring at her. "He's dead, Florence!"

"It's his heart," Florence said, pale herself. Ellen ran on her way upstairs.

"Gibbs," she said, at his side, "your father—we found him in his chair—he's—I think he's dead—Gibbs——"

"Good God!" he said violently. He pushed her aside as he ran to the door. Ellen stood still for a moment in the centre of the room. Then she called Lizzie.

"Lizzie," she said, quivering, "a terrible thing has happened. Mr. Josselyn's father has dropped dead. I want you to keep Tommy in the nursery all morning.

We'll have the doctor here—other people—and I don't want him to know. He can play on his porch——"

"Depend on me, Mrs. Josselyn," Lizzie said quietly. "Well, the poor old man, God rest him!"

"It was the quarrel—it was the quarrel—and Gibbs will never forgive himself!" Ellen said to herself, as she went slowly downstairs again.

The whole house was in confusion now. Gibbs and Torrens were bending over the dreadful figure in the chair by the study fire, Florence hovered near them, Keno and one or two of the other maids were grouped fearfully near the door.

As Ellen came in Torrens straightened himself, and looked at Gibbs.

"That wasn't heart failure, Mr. Josselyn," he said quietly, "he's shot himself right through the heart—look here, sir."

One of the girls gave a hysterical scream, and Ellen cried out: "Oh, no—oh, no, why should he do that!"

But her eyes, and the eyes of everyone else in the room, went swiftly to Gibbs; the son whose bitter quarrel with him had broken the old man's heart.

"Get these girls out of the room, Ellen," Gibbs said briefly. "And have them fix my father's bed, Florence; we're going to get him upstairs." He turned sharply to Torrens. "What did you say?"

"I say that I don't think we had better touch him, sir," the man answered. "We'll have the coroner here, sir, and he'll want to find things like they are——"

"I guess you're right," Gibbs said, after a pause, staring at him dully. "I guess you're right. We'll have to have the coroner—who is the coroner, and where is he, do you know?"

"Mineola," quavered one of the maids.

"Yes, that's right," Torrens approved.

"I can telephone for him, sir," Florence offered.

"I suppose you had better," Gibbs said. "And telephone for Mr. Lathrop, at Sands Point."

"We did telephone George," Ellen told him quickly, "he is on his way."

"Do you know where to telephone Mrs. Josselyn?" Florence asked respectfully.

Ellen and Gibbs looked at each other. It was the first time they had thought of Lillian.

"Yes, telephone her at Mrs. Pointdexter's——" Ellen said hesitatingly. "Perhaps I had better do that. Had Torrens better go for her? It isn't very far. I'll telephone and tell Mrs. Pointdexter to prepare her somehow."

Immediately activities of all sorts commenced. Torrens went off on his errand, Florence went to the telephone, and the maids scattered. Gibbs seemed dazed; Ellen kept herself in his neighbourhood. Florence came back from the telephone for advice: the coroner had asked if they had seen the revolver with which Mr. Josselyn had killed himself, sir.

Gibbs roused himself. Ellen saw him brace himself to go into the room of horror again. She went with him. Presently Gibbs himself went to tell the waiting coroner, at the telephone, that they did not seem able to find the weapon.

"What did he say?" Ellen asked him.

"Said he was coming over," Gibbs answered with weary indifference.

Presently George came in, breathing cold air, pulling off his thick gloves, and full of sympathetic distress.

With him came Joe, silent, full of sympathy. Ellen felt them both towers of strength. In an incredibly short time other men arrived, old Doctor Cutter, and Corrigan, the coroner, a stout, cheerful-looking man, the sheriff and his deputies. The lower hall, Ellen noticed, was tracked with the mud of boots. It was all like a dream. In all the strangeness, Ellen heard Keno saying that the cleaner was there, did Ellen know which coat Mrs. Josselyn meant to have cleaned? and Ellen thought that was strange, too. Lillian would wear black now; Ellen would wear black; everything was changed. And yet the cleaner called as usual.

George came to her, where she sat forlornly in the hall, and told her to go upstairs.

"Have a fire," he said kindly, "and let Tommy come in and play. Try not to let the thing scare you——"

"Does Lillian know?" Ellen asked.

"Lillian is on her way here; she'll come upstairs, too," George said. "Now go on up, dear. This will only distress you."

Ellen obeyed. She and Tommy and Lizzie shared her fire, and while Ellen read the adventures of Sinbad the Sailor, Lizzie put the room in order, and unpacked all the clothes that Gibbs had so swiftly packed a few hours ago.

After awhile Keno came in to ask her to come to Lillian's room, and Ellen found Lillian there, with the sympathetic Mrs. Pointdexter in attendance. Lillian was lying by the fire, robed in white. She turned aside her head, as Ellen came in, and burst into tears. After a moment she regained her composure, but while the other women murmured together, she did not speak.

Now and then she touched her eyes with a folded handkerchief.

"I don't think Lillian'll live through it," Mrs. Pointdexter said presently, with watering eyes.

"Yes, I will—yes, I will," Lillian said bravely. "Because I know that is what he would want me to do!"

Ellen escaped as soon as she decently could. In the hall she met Sophy, one of the upstairs maids.

"Is there anything I could get for you, Mrs. Josselyn?" the girl asked sympathetically. "I'm going in to Landmann's for some clothes and hats——"

Ellen glanced at the carefully written list. "Very simple, *but smart*," Lillian had underlined. An impulse of utter revolt smote her.

But she said nothing for a moment. Then she mildly asked Sophy to use her own judgment. Since life was what it was there must be funerals: and at funerals the family must be decently craped and veiled.

About ten o'clock George came to her room, and carefully closed the door behind him.

"This matter begins to look rather serious, Ellen," he said, his face very grave.

"You can't find the pistol?" she asked quickly.

"Oh, yes, we found it—it was in the wastebasket—on the other side the room. Corrigan says that he couldn't have *possibly*——" He paused. "They've sent for Dan Ryan."

"Ryan?" Ellen asked, puzzled.

"The District Attorney," George said quietly.

"Then that's——" she began, with whitening lips. Her voice stopped.

"That's murder," George Lathrop finished. "Anyway, these fellows say so. They may be wrong, I

hope to God they are! But it's going to be something of a strain—where could you send the boy and his nurse? They'd better not be in the house."

"To Port Washington—Aunt Elsie's. I'll send them at once!" she promised, trying to collect her senses.

"That's right. And pull yourself together, Ellen."

He patted her shoulder affectionately and left the room. Ellen turned to the window and stood there a moment, struggling to control her nerves. There was a tightening sensation in her throat, her lips were dry, and her hands ice cold. As she stared out across the bare garden and clipped hedges, a motor-car wheeled into the pebbled drive and stopped at the door. Four men stepped from the automobile. Instinctively Ellen knew that among them was the District Attorney.

She turned giddy a moment, her senses swimming.

"I mustn't give way like this," she told herself sharply, sinking into a chair, and making a desperate attempt to compose herself.

Half an hour later, when George Lathrop knocked again on her door, she was still sitting there.

"Is Lizzie here?" he asked. "Ryan has come. He wants to talk to her. I told him about the boy and your wish to get him away. He understands and is quite willing. He'll get Lizzie's deposition and then she may go."

Ellen rose bravely and went toward the nursery.

"This is all a formality, my dear," George said kindly. "We'll have to have all the maids in, Torrens and the rest. The coroner must have a verdict, you know. We won't keep Lizzie long. And, Ellen, Ryan will question you later, you know. I'll be right

there. And let me advise you, my dear. Don't talk fast; think a moment before you answer and be sure of what you say—don't try to keep anything back. No matter where the conversation seems to lead, tell the sober, careful truth."

"George!" Ellen said in sudden terror, "they'll find out that Gibbs and his father had a terrible quarrel yesterday—you must have noticed the cut on his forehead——"

"They know all about that!" he answered soothingly. "They'll know everything, sooner or later. So just go straight ahead, and tell them the story just as you would tell me——"

"But a wife isn't expected to testify against her husband," she said, half wild with apprehension. The man looked at her silently for a moment.

"Do you realize the situation that we are facing, Ellen?" he asked, with deadly gravity. "Do you realize the danger of your insinuation that your telling the simple truth would be construed into testimony against Gibbs?"

She looked at him, breathing hard.

"I see!" she said, in a whisper. "George, I'll put everything out of my mind—I promise you! I'll try to be sensible. But, George—they won't—they can't——"

He did not speak, but his look silenced her.

"You want Lizzie, don't you?" she said composedly, after a moment. "I'll send her out. And meanwhile, I'll be packing the baby's things, and send them away directly."

"Excellent!" he said. "Then we can get hold of Lizzie again if we need her."

"I'll telephone Aunt Elsie," Ellen added thoughtfully. She went into the nursery where Lizzie had been reading to Tommy and sent the girl out.

Lizzie was downstairs not more than fifteen minutes. Ellen looked fearfully at her face when she came up.

"It wasn't anything," Lizzie said, in a low tone, over her packing. "He just asked me a few questions, and how I knew there was a pistol in that drawer—and whether I had heard anything about Mr. Josselyn and his father fighting—he spoke kind enough, and a young fellow there wrote it down. I said I hadn't been downstairs until after they had their trouble——"

"Listen," said Tommy, rushing in from the other room, and insinuating his person into his mother's lap, "Will you tell Aunt Elsie that I can go down on the ice?"

"You be a good boy for Lizzie, dearest," Ellen said, kissing him. "And you'll keep him absolutely by himself, Lizzie?" she asked. "I don't want him to hear any talk of this." Ellen sighed in sick foreboding. There would be talk enough! She had his luncheon and Lizzie's brought upstairs, and saw them off at one o'clock. Gibbs came up for a moment, looking white, and Tommy gave his parents frantic hugs for good-bye. Ellen breathed easier when the little boy was out of the atmosphere of death and mystery.

CHAPTER XIII

"JUST tell me simply and fully all about yesterday," said the District Attorney pleasantly. Ellen, facing him across the big table in the library, smiled nervously in answer to his encouraging smile. The library seemed full of men: some writing, some watching her. Doctor Cutter was there, and George Lathrop. The air was thick with the odour of strong cigars, and also the smell of trays of coffee and sandwiches that had been taken away a short time before. Ellen had heard one of the men order them as unconcernedly as if he were in a restaurant.

She began shakily, gaining confidence as she went on. They were all kind to her; they even infused a sort of brightness into the air. Occasionally she was interrupted, but the questions were unexpectedly few and brief.

"Just a minute there, Mrs. Josselyn. About that revolver. You came into the study and found the girl looking at it?"

"She had it in her hand."

"Raised in the air?"

"Oh, no, lying idly on the table. She was frightened when I came in. I threw it in the drawer, and shut the drawer."

"She didn't go back to that room again?"

"I am sure she did not. She has told you it was a—a quarrel with her fiancé—with my brother, in

fact, that made her desperate. I sent for my brother, and they were—were reconciled."

"She couldn't have gone downstairs after dinner?"

"I know she did not. We were talking until late—until after ten o'clock, and when she went back to the nursery she left the door open. She spoke to me again while she was brushing her hair. And at eleven I went to look at my son and I saw her asleep."

"You had not suspected her attachment to your brother?"

"No, sir. She had been my aunt's—helper, and it began then."

Ellen went on with her recital. She fixed her eyes on a small bronze paper weight on the desk and tried to speak as distinctly and as deliberately as possible, striving, at the same time, to give her recollections of the events of the terrible day in proper sequence. When she finished there was a tense stillness in the room.

It was broken by the crackle of a sheet of paper on which Ryan had made some notes while she had been speaking and which he now began to study carefully. George rose and filled a glass with water and brought it to her. There was a general stir among the room's occupants; a sibilant murmur was audible.

"Now, Mrs. Josselyn, there are some questions I should like to ask you." Ryan laid down his notes and cleared his throat. "I want you to go back to the scene of the quarrel. At the time you were standing on the landing and you saw and heard everything that was done and said. Did you know what the quarrel was about?"

"Not then. No, sir."

"Not then—I see. But later you did?"

"Later my father-in-law told me that it was because he had seen the item in the paper."

"The item, yes—we have that here. But you saw the two men fight?—yes. And now tell me, did you hear your husband say anything in that fight? Begin at the beginning——"

"They talked so low—and so fast——" Ellen said, beginning to tremble, "I couldn't hear it all. But I heard Mr. Josselyn call out: 'That's a deliberate falsehood!' and then my husband said that he could not say that to him——"

"Didn't he say 'I'll kill you if you say that again?'" Ryan suggested.

"I don't think he said that. I couldn't say——"

"Exactly," Ryan said. "You were excited and frightened by this noise, and naturally you only got a vague impression of it." He glanced at a paper before him. "Go on, Mrs. Josselyn, you saw the blow struck?"

"Yes, sir. I saw Mr. Josselyn reach for the paper-cutter, and I screamed, I think."

"Why did he reach for it? What had his son said?"

"He said 'I'll *stop* you——!'" Ellen began, and was silent.

"He was terribly excited and angry," Ryan said quietly, not looking at her, "and he shouted, 'I'll stop you!' What else?"

Ellen glanced at George.

"Why, they were speaking both together—and so fast——" she began.

"What did he say that made you call out, 'Oh, no, Gibbs!' or 'Oh, don't, Gibbs'!" Ryan asked.

"He said something about a lie," Ellen stammered, "he said he would—he said his father was saying things that weren't so and that he would kill him if he went on——"

"I see!" Ryan said quietly, glancing toward the stenographer a moment. He paused, pursing his lips. "Well, go on. You said something about the sentimental attachment your husband had conceived for his stepmother. Did that worry you very much?"

"It made me unhappy, a little," Ellen said simply. "But I never thought anything was wrong. I told my father-in-law last night that there was nothing wrong," she added eagerly. "I told him that we would all forget it, and that he must not feel too badly about it."

"Tell us again what happened after your husband rushed out?" the District Attorney said. She repeated her story, attempting to use the same language; she had quieted the old man, dined with him and her son, taken Tommy up to bed, come back to say goodnight at about eight o'clock, and talked for an hour or more with Lizzie, and then sat reading until she retired at eleven. And she had then seen the study light shining on the corner of the house.

"So that your father-in-law was up at that time," Ryan said. "Now then, you say you went to sleep. When were you awakened, and by what?"

"I waked up, and found my husband sitting by the fire," Ellen said. "It was two o'clock."

"It was two o'clock. And you and he had a talk?"

"No, we didn't talk. He said that he was going to leave the house in the morning, and I agreed. But we didn't say anything more."

"How did his manner impress you, Mrs. Josselyn?"

Ellen looked at George again.

"I thought he was still terribly shaken over his quarrel with his father," she said.

"He did seem shaken and excited?"

"Yes. I thought he did."

"You didn't tell him that you had quieted his father, and that you and the little boy had cheered him up so that he was quite himself at dinner?"

"No, sir."

"Why didn't you, Mrs. Josselyn?"

"Why, I thought—I thought he would be less troubled in the morning, and that I would try to—that I would talk to him then."

"You would try to—will you tell us what you started to say?"

"Well—I would try to—to reconcile them, I suppose."

Ryan took off his glasses and polished them with a large silk handkerchief, looking at them the while.

"That is, you thought that he was still angry rather than sorry?" he asked.

"No—I can't say that I thought that," Ellen said, attempting to speak firmly.

The glasses went on again and Ryan looked at her.

"You had good news for him, you know," he reminded her kindly. "You had to tell him that his father was sorry for the trouble and willing to forgive and forget. Wouldn't it be natural to suppose that such news would be welcome to a man who was bitterly repentant for his anger?"

"I suppose so," Ellen faltered.

"But that didn't occur to you? You felt that he was still too enraged to be approached in that way?"

Ellen felt suffocated. The close room, the watching faces, the quiet, merciless voice that probed her very soul, the dark walls with their dignified lining of books, the windows against which snow was beginning to fall softly, all began to waver in black fog before her eyes—she felt a hideous sensation of nausea.

George sprang to her side, and she caught his arm.

"You're all right, dear!" he said, tenderly, his eyes close to hers. She looked dazedly into them, and spoke in a childish bewildered voice:

"Yes, I'm all right, George!"

"Would you like to rest a few minutes, Ellen?"

"Oh, no, thank you!" she said quickly. And turning back with great dignity to the District Attorney, she answered: "I thought I would not distress my husband with any reference to the matter that night. I thought sleep would do us all good, and make us see things in a better light."

"That was quite natural," Ryan said mildly. The tension in the library relaxed. "That is all, Mrs. Josselyn." Some of the men rose; there was a little stir and confusion in the room. Ellen went out with George. She turned to him in the hall.

"Was that all right?" she asked, giddy and uncertain. He nodded reassuringly. They went into the music room, where Gibbs sat, with Joe and Doctor Cutter. There was a tray there with some food on it, the coffee urn was steaming, and Ellen was glad to have a cup of coffee: it was two o'clock. She felt as if she could never get enough of the scalding, reviving drink, but she would not touch the solids, although Joe brought her cold chicken and salad on a plate, and coaxed her to eat.

George ate heartily, with great bites, walking about the while, and talking to them all. After a few minutes, however, he said he must go back to the library, and Gibbs went with him. Ellen had sat down close to her husband on the wide davenport, and put her cold little hand into his. He was pale, and looked tired, but there was a new look of peace in his eyes.

"Poor little old girl," he said to her, "I'll get you out of all this, and carry you off to the country somewhere—and make it all up to you!"

"Of course you understand that this is a sort of preliminary formality, Gibbs?" George asked him.

"And after this, does the coroner bring in his verdict?" Joe added.

"The coroner and the County detectives have been all over the study," George said. "The circumstance of the pistol being found seventeen feet away from the body, and some other details, are conclusive. Death came from a revolver shot that was fired by some person or persons unknown. Ryan is going at it thoroughly: that's his business. We've had all the maids in, they've all satisfied him of their absolute innocence. Every one of them has an alibi."

"Then, what's all this?" Ellen asked.

"This is merely one of the District Attorney's duties of office. He is bound to find out what he can, while the whole matter is fresh." George put down his coffee cup, and threw his crumpled napkin on the tray. "You understand that anything you say now may be used later, Gibbs?" he said, clearing his throat.

"Perfectly."

"They've pretty well satisfied themselves as to the order of events," George continued. "What they'll

try to get out of you is that matter of where you were last night?"

"They asked Lizzie where she was, and they asked me!" Ellen said eagerly.

"They've asked everyone," George assured her.

"I can only tell them what I told you this morning, George," Gibbs said calmly.

George shot him a look, but nodded as if he were satisfied.

"That's all right. Shall we go?"

They went off together.

Time wore slowly on. Ellen and Joe talked for awhile in low tones, the snow lisped against the windows of the little music room. One of the maids came to say in a hushed voice that the "men" wanted to speak to Mrs. Josselyn, and Ellen went out to talk to the undertaker, who respectfully wished to ask for some information. Already great boxes of flowers had begun to arrive, and motor-cars were wheeling about the drive, making brief stops, wheeling away again. Sophy had come back with Louis, the second chauffeur, and a dozen boxes were piled on Ellen's bed. Before three o'clock the first reporter appeared.

When Ellen went back to the music room, Joe told her that Lillian had been fainting, and that Doctor Cutter was with her.

"Did you know that she went off with that man Pepper for dinner last night, Ellen?" he asked.

"Last night!" Ellen echoed, amazed.

"Yes, it seems that she wanted to see Pepper, or he wanted to see her—she just used the Pointdexter invitation as a blind. They went off somewhere for

dinner, the 'Wayside Inn,' it was, and then he took her to Mrs. Pointdexter's house, about twelve."

"How did you know this, Joe?"

"It's Lillian's alibi: she told Ryan the whole thing. Cutter was telling me. It seems that they were there until the place was actually closing, talking. Ryan has sent for the fellow who runs the Inn." Joe shook his head, half-smiled. "Gosh, she's lucky!" he ejaculated. "She's got a dozen people to prove what she did, she wasn't even in the house herself——!"

"Joe!" Ellen said in a whisper. "Where was Gibbs last night?"

"Oh, don't you worry, Ellen—he can clear that up, easy enough! These things always sound scary, and then they all smooth right out——" Joe's tone brightened. "Well!" he said. "Ryan dragged in Mrs. Pointdexter who came over here with Lillian. She had hysterics. Ryan told her that they'd have to have her testimony at the trial!"

"There'll be a trial, Joe?"

"I suppose so."

"But won't they have to have someone suspected, to try?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

Ellen began restlessly to pace the floor.

"Lillian and—that man—might have come here—in the night!" she said feverishly.

"They'll have to account for every second, old girl, you may be sure of that!"

"Or it might have been a burglar, Joe?"

"We-ll, they say not. They say that the study was lighted, which would warn any burglar. Then it was absolutely inaccessible by window, there was nothing

of value there, and any man might have rifled the house without disturbing the study. But more than that, Mr. Josselyn was quietly seated in his chair, he had made no struggle, you know, he didn't even rise. Ryan made the point that *he knew* the man—or woman—who fired that pistol."

"*He knew!*" Ellen echoed, with white lips. She buried her face in her hands, her brother saw a violent shudder shake her whole body. Suddenly she looked up at the clock. "Four o'clock!" she said feverishly. "Why doesn't he come out?"

CHAPTER XIV

"Now we've been questioning the girls in the house, and your stepmother—and your wife," Ryan said, casually, arranging papers on the desk before him, and glancing now and then at Gibbs as he did so. "And I think if you will give us your version of this affair, Mr. Josselyn——?"

"Certainly!" Gibbs said, sitting back in his chair, and folding his arms. As Ellen had felt the unspoken friendliness in the air, so Gibbs was instantly aware of an antagonism; as Ellen had seen that they sheltered and favoured her in their questions, so Gibbs saw that he was not to be spared. The District Attorney, who had sold papers and run errands for a living, twenty-five years ago, when little Gibbs Josselyn was riding his pony, and having his beautiful little suits made to order, was not apt to be over-gentle in his dealings with a rich man's son. This man would inherit a fortune from the silent, waxen hand that lay still upstairs, and if he had had anything to do with the hideous event that had brought him to that fortune, Daniel Ryan was not the man to spare him.

Gibbs's face was white, and his eyes strained, before the quarrel had been lived and re-lived again. He admitted his admiration of his father's wife, admitted that it had given his own wife and his father some concern, admitted that the matter had caused a strained relationship between the four. He did not glance

at George: his eyes were fixed upon his interrogator.

"So that we finally have these facts to go on," Ryan summarized. "You and your father quarrel about your relationship with this lady, your father strikes you, and you threaten to kill him. You leave the house in anger, and—I beg your pardon?"

"I say that what I said could not be construed into a threat to kill him," Gibbs protested.

"You mean that you phrased it, 'I'll kill you if you say that again'?"

"Yes, I—I don't think that is quite the same thing. One might be a threat, Mr. Ryan, and the other more of a—well, more of a boast, or of a—a silencer that should prove effective," George interposed mildly.

"I see," Ryan said drily. "Well!" he resumed, after a pause, "you leave the house in anger, and on foot. A few hours later, presumably between the hours of nine and ten o'clock, somebody *familiar with this house* enters the room your father is sitting in; does not alarm him enough to cause him to leave his seat; goes to the table-drawer where he keeps his pistol; takes it out, and deliberately kills him. Afterward throwing the pistol into a basket seventeen feet away. We've cross-questioned the maids, but you can easily see that no servant could do that without instantly alarming him. More than that, he disliked their coming and going, and would have questioned any one who came in. We know that pistol was in the drawer, because your wife saw it there, as late as yesterday morning, in the hands of the girl, Lizzie. Lizzie was talking with your wife at her fire until after ten o'clock, undresses and goes to bed, opening the com-

municating door between the bathroom and bedrooms—you know what they were talking of, and why that girl had nothing in her mind last night but her own happiness! Mrs. Josselyn then sits on by the fire, sees that Lizzie is asleep, goes to bed herself, and sleeps until you awaken her, in what she describes as an excited condition, at two o'clock. Those facts we have. Now perhaps you'll tell us just where you were last night between the hours of eleven minutes past six and two o'clock."

"I'll tell you as well as I can," Gibbs said simply. "I went first to the club where I sat in the little smoking room for a long time—more than an hour. Gettling, the steward there, came and touched me on the arm, and said that it was nearly eight o'clock, and asked me to dine."

"You had had nothing to eat?"

"Nothing."

"Nor to drink?"

"Yes, I had had a whiskey-and-soda when I went in, and then later another."

"Ah! And did you drink with your dinner? Go on, please, just as the events transpired."

"I had two cocktails before my dinner: I was still upset from the talk with my father——"

"The quarrel?"

"The quarrel, yes. I didn't eat—much. I may have eaten something, but I am not sure. I went out——"

"What time was this?"

"Nine o'clock, I should say. Gettling would remember that, because he followed me out to ask me something about the Hunt Breakfast on Thanksgiving."

"Will you get hold of him?" Ryan asked one of his men in an undertone. There was a moment's interruption and murmuring. Then Ryan said: "Excuse me. Will you go on?"

"After that I started walking, without thinking much where I was going," Gibbs said. "It was dark, but not very cold. I walked a long way, and then I saw the lights of the 'Wayside Inn.' We'd been there before, last summer. I went up on the porch, and stood there, looking in."

"Why didn't you go straight in, Mr. Josselyn?"

"I don't know. I think I wasn't sure that I wanted to go in."

"You walk—what is it—something more than eight miles, in the dark," commented the District Attorney, "and then you vacillate about going in?"

"I remember thinking that I was hungry," Gibbs went on. "But they were dancing in there, and I didn't feel much like getting into a dance."

"But you did go in?"

"No. I didn't. While I was standing there I recognized—I recognized—friends—at a little table right near the window——"

"Friends? Who were these friends, Mr. Josselyn?"

"That I'd rather not say, really," Gibbs said, in his old autocratic manner.

"We've had Lillian's story, Gibbs," George said, in a low tone. Gibbs gave him a quick, startled look: the blood mounted to his face.

"You saw Mrs. Josselyn and her lover, eh?" said Ryan.

George saw the muscles of Gibbs's jaw suddenly tighten.

"I object to that term," he said quietly.

"We needn't mince words," Ryan said sharply, his eyes narrowing. "Go on with your story. You went into the bar?"

"I did not go in at all," Gibbs reiterated.

"But somebody saw you there?"

"Not that I know of."

"And nobody saw you on your way there?"

"Not that I know of."

"You turned around, and walked back?"

"I turned around, and walked back."

"Reaching home——"

"Reaching home at about one o'clock, I think. I sat by the fire in my wife's bedroom for awhile, and she woke up. We had a short conversation, and I told her that I proposed to leave my father's house the next morning. Then I went to bed."

"One moment, Mr. Josselyn. On that walk back—a long walk, you know, for a man alone in the dark, you must have passed through several villages. Didn't it occur to you to stop somewhere else for food?"

"I don't remember thinking of food."

"Yet you thought of food when you reached the 'Wayside Inn'?"

Gibbs was silent.

"How do you account for the fact that you did that?"

"I changed my mind, I suppose."

"Exactly. You changed your mind. But do you know what *caused* you to change your mind?"

Again Gibbs did not speak.

"I could believe that to a man in your excited condition the mere sight of the woman he loved dining there with another man might cause a decided change

of mind," the District Attorney said thoughtfully, making a series of hard little marks with his pencil on the blotter before him, and finally raising his head to look Gibbs straight in the eyes. "But I wish, for your own sake, Mr. Josselyn, that you could find someone to confirm this rather extraordinary story. Eight miles," he added musingly, "well, a man in condition might walk that far, and decide not to eat anything, and walk back—I used to walk once myself, a good deal. But——" He pursed his lips and elevated his eyebrows with the shadow of a shrug. "One more thing," he asked, in a dead silence. "You did not tell your wife last night what you had seen?"

"That I had seen my father's wife dining with Pepper? No."

"Why didn't you tell her, Mr. Josselyn?"

"Why—it did not occur to me to do so. I never have discussed the matter with her."

"Tell me just what you mean by 'the matter'?"

"The—the—anything that concerned my stepmother, I suppose."

"You quarrel with your father, threaten to kill him, leave his house, over this very man, and then do not consider this fresh evidence of Mrs. Thomas Josselyn's relationship with Pepper of sufficient importance to tell your wife? Didn't it occur to you that here was an absolute refutation of your father's suspicions; suspicions that you knew were shared by your wife?"

"No, I don't remember thinking that," Gibbs asserted doggedly.

"You didn't say to yourself: 'Here is an excuse for me—and more than an excuse!' You didn't say 'my dear, to show you how innocent I am in this whole

affair, Lillian—or whatever you call her—and Pepper were dining together this very evening!'"

Gibbs did not answer. The District Attorney looked at him dispassionately a few minutes.

"Well!" he said, resuming his brisk manner, "it seems to me that that would have been a natural course, under the circumstances, for a man who had had exactly your experience. You, on the other hand, produce this story only *after you have had a conversation with Mrs. Thomas Josselyn*, on the morning following the discovery of the murder. Nobody, previous to the murder nobody, previous to the finding of the body, has heard of this—this sixteen-mile walk, I believe?"

"I have told you that I did not mention it to my wife," Gibbs answered; "I saw no one else."

"I should like to call your attention to the fact that Mr. Josselyn was unwilling to bring his stepmother's name into this discussion a few minutes ago," George said quietly. "That would seem to me to indicate that there had been no pre-arrangement between them."

"Exactly," Ryan said, with a sharp look. "Thank you—I think that is all. Oh, one moment. When you came home from this walk, you approached the house by the rear road, crossed the field of the adjoining property, entered the gate on the tennis-court, and so came around the west face of the house, to the front door?"

"Yes, sir."

"So that, by a really circuitous route, you did not pass the lighted study window?"

"Accidentally, I did just that."

"Accidentally, of course. Thank you, Mr. Josselyn."

Again there was the little stir of men changing position. Gibbs and George went to the desk.

"I will make it my business to look up those matters you called to my attention, Mr. Ryan," George said, in a business-like tone, "I'll see Mr. Josselyn's man of business—find out if there was anything irregular, any dispute there. There was one point I would like to make before we end this investigation: is it possible that Mr. Josselyn fell asleep in his chair, and was shot in that state?"

The District Attorney nodded thoughtfully. He had scored steadily, throughout the long day, but he was rasped by the conviction that Gibbs despised him.

"I will speak to Corrigan about it. That would be an important point, of course." He glanced at the coroner, who had risen, and was standing beside him.

"Doctor Cutter spoke of that," the man said. "But it is impossible. When we found the body the head was sunk forward, exactly like a man asleep. But the bullet could not have entered the body as it did enter it while it was in that position. Mr. Josselyn was sitting erect when the shot was fired, and his assassin must have engaged him in conversation, holding his own hand, with the revolver in it, barely above the level of the table."

"I see," George said. He and Ryan fell into a low-toned conversation at one of the windows. All over the room there was the rustle preceding departure. A deputy, a kind-faced man of large build, would remain in the house, the others would return in the morning.

Presently George and Gibbs went back to the music room, and Ellen took her place at her husband's side again. They talked a little of the funeral, and fell silent. After awhile there was one knock, among a hundred knocks upon the door, to announce Mrs. Pointdexter.

The lady, pretty and agitated, came in. She was an empty-headed, babbling little woman, with a rather scarred record behind her. She said that it had been a perfectly terrible day for poor Lillian—wasn't the whole thing too awful for words? She said that she thought Mr. Josselyn had had some enemy they had never heard of. Lillian had said that she, May Pointdexter, was an angel to stay with her, but, my goodness, wasn't that what friendship was for?

"I'm going to have some dinner sent up," said the visitor, tenderly. "She hasn't eaten a thing all day! We made her try on some of her things—it's terrible, you know, but you *have to*, and she cried as if her heart would break. She feels so terribly about having been at dinner with Lindsay Pepper: she only *went* to tell him that his feeling for her worried her husband, and it must stop. We were playing cards, just at twelve o'clock, when they came in. And isn't it strange the way things come out, we had supper, you know, and we were all there talking until after two. Mrs. Jack Swift was there, and Bobby Poett, and Bobby left with Lindsay, and spent the night with him. And when Lindsay and Bobby got to Great Neck, he had to wake up the Jap to fix Bobby's bed—so that he can testify that they were there at just half-past two! Lillian told that What's-his-name in the library all about it. But isn't it all simply terrible? I telephoned my husband, and he said 'What do you think?' and I said 'I don't know *what* to think!'"

Mrs. Pointdexter flashed her bright, restless eyes from one face to another in turn. Nobody else spoke.

"Keno kept coming to say that there were reporters downstairs," she went on presently. "But I said that

poor Lillian couldn't see a soul. I told them that the Kellogg Galleries had her picture: I suppose every paper will have to have a picture, and you might as well be polite to them! But isn't it all terrible: I don't know when I've had such a shock in my life!"

"My God, that girl is having an enjoyable time!" George ejaculated sourly, when the visitor had gone upstairs again.

Ellen looked at him. A dimple appeared in her tired little face, her lips trembled. Then the muscles of her face began to work suddenly, she laughed in a high key, and broke into hysterical weeping, with her head on her husband's shoulder.

CHAPTER XV

After the quiet funeral, when the Josselyn family had run the gauntlet of a hundred reporters and photographers, and were back in the "Villino dell' Orto" again, Joe came upstairs to find his sister. Ellen was in her room; she had taken off her black hat with its crisp, hanging veil, but her soft hair was still crushed from its weight. It was two o'clock, and a low table had been drawn before her fire, and spread with tea-things.

"Come in, Joe," his sister said, when he knocked. "And will you have some tea?" she added, with a shadow of her old smile. "I know you didn't have any lunch, like the rest of us."

"How do you feel, dear?" he asked, taking the offered cup.

"Oh—fine!" She blinked back the too-ready tears, and controlled the trembling of her mouth. "T-t-tiring day!" she added, unsteadily.

"Awful day. Listen, Sis," Joe's tone suddenly changed and became firm, "I want to talk to you about something! Gosh, those are good!" he interrupted himself to say, in reference to the tea-biscuit he was devouring. "Where's Gibbs? Has he had anything to eat?"

"Why, it was for Gibbs that I asked them to bring this up," Ellen answered. "But before it came, George had called him away. There's so much to

attend to—so many different things. Joe, did you hear anything more about the Bridgeport position?"

"Well, that's what I meant to speak to you about, Ellen. I had a letter from this fellow Mainwaring, yesterday. They'll give it to me. In fact, they wanted me to-day: but of course I couldn't go. I can't get there until to-morrow morning."

"You are going, then, Joe?"

"I think so." He sighed, rubbed his hair boyishly with his hand. "I saw Harriet," he added suddenly, "and I think she's satisfied to have it this way. Mr. Lathrop was a king about it, and he said that I should stay where I am. But I got this job through him, you know, and I didn't feel comfortable keeping it now—I when I've been a disappointment and a trouble to you all. So I'll go to Bridgeport."

"You've never been a trouble and a disappointment to me," Ellen said tenderly. "You're doing a splendid thing——"

"No, I'm not!" he interrupted her gruffly. "Aunt Elsie was telling me this morning that I'm none too good for Lizzie—that Lizzie is this and that——"

"Aunt Elsie will feel far fonder of Lizzie than she ever would of any other girl," Ellen smiled. "Of course she doesn't know——"

"Nobody knows!" he interrupted. "Nobody ever will."

Ellen looked with pity at the clouded face: Joe seemed so young, so much a boy to face these grave realities.

"So you go to Bridgeport?"

"Yes," he said, rousing himself from his brooding. "And, Ellen, I think Lizzie and I will be married, and she'll go with me."

"Married!" she echoed. "But when, Joe?"

"Well——" He hesitated. "To-night, I think."

"To-night!"

"I guess so."

"But, dearest boy! Don't you have to have a license and things?"

"I've got them. Her mother and father will be there, and Aunt Elsie. That's all."

"But Joe—so quickly!" Ellen mused. "After all, perhaps it's the wisest thing," she conceded. "I'll try to-morrow to get someone else for Tommy."

"I was going to speak to you about that, Sis. Why can't we take Tommy? You'll have your hands full——"

She turned deathly white, and leaned back in her chair with closed eyes.

"I don't mean that!" he exclaimed, quickly. "Ah, pull yourself together, dear old girl!"

"I know what you meant!" she said, in a whisper. And opening her eyes, she leaned toward him, and laid an icy hand on his hand. "Oh, Joe—I know it, I know it!" she exclaimed, in an agony. "Every time I look into his face, I know it's coming—and I can't do anything! I can't do anything! Oh, Joe—if it comes to that, I can't bear it! I can't go through with it! I can't have them questioning—and questioning—and that horrible Ryan with his horrible politeness! Joe, you don't know how happy we were in Paris—never a cloud—we didn't want more money—we could have been happy with less! And to have deliberately come back here, to all the *wretchedness* of this house—and now to this! Joe, you don't know how proud he is—it will kill him. And it wasn't anger that Gibbs

felt that night—not all anger, anyway. It was shame —I know him so well!—it was shame that part of what his father said was true! He couldn't bear it!"

Ellen had gotten to her feet: she began to walk about the room, wringing her hands, and pressing her locked fingers against her lips like a person in pain.

"Oh, I know what you've all been waiting for—these days!" she said, in her whisper of anguish. "I've seen it in George's face—I know why you want to take Tommy away from it all! I know that Gibbs has expected it: we've been together for three days now, Joe, we've sat for hours, with my hand in his—not saying a word."

She came back to the fireplace. Joe had risen, too, and was watching her with a distressed face. She laid her hands on his shoulders, and looked with wild appeal into his eyes.

"Joe!" she faltered, almost inaudibly, "I lie awake at night, racking my brains—and there's nobody else! They can't find anybody else! But, Joe, if he *did* do it —if his father, in that cool, smiling way of his——"

"Look here, Ellen!" Joe said bluntly, "I'm surprised at you. Gibbs is going to depend on you now as he never did in his life before, and here you are skipping your meals, lying awake nights, and getting hysterical! My God, Sis, you'll do him much more harm than good this way."

"Yes, I know!" Ellen said quickly. "But, Joe, she added, "I keep thinking that that Ryan will ask me—ask me outright what I think, and what can I say? I can't——"

"Now, listen, Ellen," he interrupted firmly. "In the first place, he never will ask you what you *think*.

He'll simply ask you what you did, or said, or heard said: he may not put you on the stand at all. Look how easily they let Lizzie off. He asked her what she was doing with the pistol—she said that she had had a quarrel with the young man she was engaged to—he went right on to the next question. Now just calm down. Take things easily. And you let us have Tommy. Lizzie adores the kid—we both do. And he'll be out of the way of the whole thing!"

"I'll try, Joe," she said humbly.

"You'll do it, if you try," Joe answered bracingly. "And, Ellen—if this thing should come to a trial—just put yourself into training. Make yourself eat, go to bed early, read books, keep up your appearance—all those things help. If you're well bodily, it goes a long way to keeping well in your mind. Get me?"

"I get you!" she smiled, a little sadly, as she returned his kiss. "And you may be married to-night?"

"Will be!"

"It seems so strange, Joe." She went with him to the door of her room. "Not what I thought my little brother's wedding day would be!" she said.

"Nor I," he answered gravely. She thought he looked all a boy as he walked away, and turned at the stairhead to wave his hand to her.

A few minutes later Gibbs came up, and Ellen lighted the flame under the spirit-lamp, and made him fresh tea. He looked tired and ill, but he smiled at her gratefully as she gave him the smoking cup.

"It won't last long now, Ellen," he said, refusing the food she offered him, but coming back for more tea. "Poor George is down there in a bunch of re-

porters: I don't know whether you noticed the way the cameras were lined up when we went out this morning? They're like a pack of wolves."

There was a knock at the door, but he did not seem to hear it. He had dropped his handsome head against the chair-back, and closed his dark, shadow-rimmed eyes. "It will seem good to get out of this, and get the little scout again, and go off out of the range of newspapers and cameras, won't it?" he asked.

"Oh, Gibbs!" Ellen's utmost resolution was unequal to the task of keeping tears from her eyes.

"I was thinking we might take the roadster," he added, "and go south—Florida, maybe, or Atlanta. We wouldn't need anything but the motor-trunk, and you could take care of the boy—he ought to be dressing himself now!"

"He does, Gibbs—you'd be surprised to see how fast he is learning. He'll be six next month, you know!" Ellen's colour rushed up, the vision of escape from all this horror had set her blood to dancing. The open road again, Gibbs and Tommy, meals here and there and everywhere——

Another knock at the door. Gibbs heard this one, and turned questioning eyes toward it.

"Stay where you are!" Ellen commanded. She went to the door. Gibbs heard one whispered word of protest and horror, and got to his feet, the colour draining from his face. He saw George's grave face, and another face or two in the background. In the foreground, their eyes sweeping the room quickly, were two blue-coated officers.

CHAPTER XVI

THE trial of Thomas Gibbs Josselyn for the murder of his father was naturally the journalistic tidbit of the day. No element of the picturesque and dramatic was lacking, and the features of the suspected man, with his mop of silver hair, the beautiful face of the woman who had caused all this misery, the old victim's dignified and handsome person, and the piquant and pathetic little figure of the prisoner's wife all became familiar visions at millions of breakfast tables. The social standing of the family, the mystery surrounding the murder, the odd relationship of the man and the two women, all these things were incalculably valuable to city editors everywhere.

Presently the will of the murdered man was filed, and caused its own sensation. After the bequests to servants and charities, and the gifts to old friends, the widow was to have her handsome allowance, payable unless she remarried, throughout her life, besides her country home at Wheatley Hills, and all it contained. To the son certain books and specified silver and jewels were bequeathed, and a moderate sum was to be held in trust for the little grandson.

All the rest went to the daughter-in-law. More than that, should Lillian remarry, she was to be given a lump sum, the remainder of her fortune to revert to Ellen. Ellen heard it all vaguely: she was not thinking of money in these days. She did not read the papers

that shrieked between the two oceans that old Thomas Josselyn had trusted her above his wife or his son.

She did not know that under all her suavity and poise Lillian was furious, and had threatened to break the will. Dissuaded from this folly, the beautiful widow had been so indiscreet as to drop a hint to Ellen's attorney.

"Did you know that Lillian said to me that she was surprised that the fact that you benefited so tremendously by the will had not been thought of as a motive for the tragedy?" George asked her, with a dry smile, one day.

"Did she say that? She talks a great deal, it seems to me," Ellen answered indifferently. George had come in to the Port Washington house, to discuss some question, and he and she were standing together at the little six-paned front window that looked out into Main Street. For a few moments her eyes idly followed the progress of a lumbering delivery-van down the snowy street, then she turned to him with sudden life in her eyes. "George!" she exclaimed: "is there any chance of their suspecting me! *Wouldn't* that be a motive?"

"Do you mean you *want* to be suspected, Ellen?"

"Ah, if they would!" she said feverishly. "Because I know I *didn't* do it——" she added, in a whisper.

The trial was set for the first week of the new year, and to Gibbs and to Ellen as well, much as she had dreaded it, it came as a relief. She had visited him every day, in his cell at the Mineola jail, and what those visits had cost her, only Ellen knew.

Every day she must nerve herself afresh to enter into

the stale, cold air, and pass the clanking doors and the watching eyes. She must nerve herself afresh for the sight of him, thin, despondent, dishonoured. She must breathe the suffocating moral atmosphere that surrounds the offenders, the human who is felt by other humans to be dangerous. She must talk to him, and yet not talk of the hideous cloud that pressed so close over him, and the hideous weight on their hearts that made them both afraid they would go mad.

Physically, he was not uncomfortable. Ellen brought him what she could in the way of comfort. He often told her that he had enjoyed his dinner, that he had slept well. But sometimes they sat for long periods together without speaking. Of what could she speak to him now? Of the free hills under the snows, of the operas they might have been attending, of the little son who had been taken away for fear he might hear his father's name?

She kept him supplied with books, and sometimes made him read aloud to her. George was often with him, full of confidence and courage.

Empty as they were, these hours at the jail were Ellen's life. Otherwise she was hardly conscious that she lived at all. She sat by the fire with her aunt, in the evening, talking with the busy, kindly woman and the old Captain, but not knowing what she said. She wrote her nightly letter to Joe or Lizzie, with a scalloped kiss for the boy, and went early to bed. Ellen's old bedroom had been turned into a bathroom years ago, and there were electric lights all over the house. But she had her old bed, and her old bureau where she had put the celluloid mirror covered with pink roses and forget-me-nots that Leonard Henshaw

had given her one Christmas, years ago. And she had the old painting of a bare-legged little girl with netted hair and scalloped skirt, crossing a rocky creek. Len had married Willa, and their pretty home was up in the "Estates." They had worked and planned for every brick of it. Willa had three lovely children now, and a rattling little motor-car in which she brought them down to market, and sometimes a girl to help her. Ellen did not know it, but Willa had envied Ellen Latimer all her life.

She rose early, and joined the old people at breakfast. Then she aired her room, and made her bed, and by that time the little closed car was at the door, with Torrens at the wheel. Closely veiled, although she was really indifferent to staring eyes and snapping cameras, she slipped into the car, and was on her way to Gibbs.

Sometimes alone, or with George, she lunched in the neighbourhood of the jail, and went back to it immediately; sometimes Torrens took her into the city, to slip like a little ghost into the shops, and get something Gibbs wanted, or she fancied he might like. Always she saw her husband twice a day, and was back in Port Washington in time to read the paper to the old Captain before dinner.

Mary Cutter, the doctor's lovely daughter-in-law, had taken it upon herself to befriend Ellen, and during these terrible days she never failed her. Sometimes she came in her own car, with a fat sweet baby as escort, to take Ellen home from Mineola, and on Christmas Eve she got out at the old house with Ellen, and dined with Captain Latimer and his family,

and kept them all talking. Later the junior doctor and his boys came for her, leaving a great mass of holly in the house, with a breath of cold, sweet, holiday air.

And when the trial began, Mary was always at Ellen's side. George called at the Main Street house on the first morning, and Mary met them at the court-house. Ellen was extremely nervous, and gave them only absent answers. She was unable to believe that the long-awaited hour had come at last.

There was already a crowd on the court-house steps: it was a bitter morning, the huddled men and women, and the policemen who were keeping order, smoked at the mouth. George took the two women quickly in at a side door, they had hardly time to be conscious of staring eyes. The bare passages were comfortably warm; a murmured word here and there gave them immediate entrance to the room where Gibbs was waiting. Ellen and her husband had time only for a few words: confused words of hope and courage. Then George called one of his clerks and bade him take the women to the court-room.

Ellen had never been in a court-room before, but she said to herself: "That's the jury-box—that's the witness stand," even with her first quick glance.

Reporters were already scribbling at a long, bare table. Several favoured spectators had secured good seats. There were round-backed chairs inside the railing which divided the big room in two. Ellen and Mary were placed in two of these chairs. Mary realized, from the sudden murmur and whisper in the room, that they were identified. Ellen realized nothing.

George came in, talking in an undertone with his associate. He nodded reassuringly to Ellen. She hardly saw him, and hardly heard him when he stopped beside her and commented in some distress upon her quick breathing. She assured him that she would be quite herself again presently. When he went away again, and disappeared through one of the doors behind the Judge's bench, she saw Ryan come in.

He was flushed, smiling, talking emphatically to a man who accompanied him. His hands were full of papers. He had the air of a man who had breakfasted well, and who was full of confidence. Ellen felt a wave of sheer hate shake her. How free he was; how comfortably ready for the day's work! And Gibbs—Gibbs would come in between two guards——

"This is merely the panelling of the jury," George had told them, "it may take several days. It's a long, stupid business."

Long or stupid, it had to do with the Josselyn case, and the seats behind the railing were all packed now. There was some bustling and whispering, and even subdued laughter. Men continued to move busily back and forth on the platform, and spoke in undertones. Mary saw a newspaper artist squinting as he made a quick sketch of the prisoner's wife.

With a great stirring and murmuring in the room, Gibbs came in, with a court officer. He was pale, but seemed neither self-conscious nor nervous, as he came quickly to his seat at the end of one of the tables. George was seated at this table, and immediately leaned toward Gibbs, engaging him for a moment in conversation. Presently Gibbs nodded consent or approval, and leaned back in his chair.

Then he saw Ellen, who was only ten feet away, and who sent him a brave smile. A score of reporters pencilled busily: "Prisoner Smiles at Wife." But Ellen's heart was torn within her. Gibbs, with that little new droop to his broad shoulders, a spectacle for this staring roomful!

Everybody rose, and she rose, too, dizzily. The clock was on the stroke of ten, and His Honour came promptly and quietly through a door at the back, to his large chair. A clerk leaned over him to murmur some message: he nodded quickly; the clerk went out. The case of the State versus Thomas Gibbs Josselyn was called.

Droning voices rose and fell; Ellen, from tense and jealous attention to every possible talesman, felt her thoughts wander. She looked at Gibbs, who was sitting with folded arms, gravely listening and staring straight ahead of him. She looked wistfully at the Judge, and thought that he had a wise and kind face. Her eyes fell upon Ryan, and again a sensation of hate made her heart sick.

George was suddenly upon his feet. Ellen's heart jumped as she heard him rap out some objection. The old Judge, deep in some papers, looked mildly over his glasses.

"Sustained!" he said mechanically. George, with a contented nod, sat down. Ryan went on questioning the candidate.

Suddenly there was a rustle of adjournment. The Judge rose and quitted the court-room. Men began to walk in every direction, voices were raised. Ellen was amazed to see that the clock showed the time to be

twenty minutes of one. The court emptied quickly, and Ellen and Mary went to the Garden City Hotel, where they had luncheon upstairs, and where George presently joined them. George was reassuring. He said that Gibbs felt a real relief to have the waiting over, and regaled them with tales of juries and judges while they ate. Ellen had the lack of appetite, and the deep thirst, of burning excitement, but she did her best to eat.

For days the panelling of the jury dragged on, and the long hours in the court-room were wearisome and uneventful. Then suddenly there was a full jury, and the trial began. Ellen was dazed by the preliminaries, and the cross-questioning seemed to her singularly irrelevant. Doctors were asserting that Thomas Josselyn had died from the effect of a pistol wound in the breast: there was endless medical testimony to prove the hour of the murder. George would ask an apparently unimportant question, and nodding, sit down. The District Attorney would jump up with another, leading nowhere, as far as Ellen could see. Between George and Ryan there was a running fire of hot words. Ellen was amazed to see them speak civilly to each other the moment Court adjourned. At luncheon she would eagerly question George as to the significance of this point or that.

"It's all going well," said George the second day. "I'm satisfied that we're gaining ground."

"I noticed that the Court ruled every time in our favour," Mary said eagerly. George nodded, but Ellen did not know until long afterward that this was an ominous sign.

"We'll have Florence on the stand this afternoon," he said. "To make the point that Mr. Josselyn was so little distressed and apprehensive, after the quarrel, that he talked cheerfully to Ellen here, and Tommy, at dinner!"

"And so he did!" Ellen said eagerly.

"Well, we'll go back," George said, rising from the table. "The press men are anxious to have a word with you, Ellen, and I think perhaps you might as well speak to them—I'll arrange it. Just as well to have them friendly. All you need say is that you are confident of the outcome—something like that."

"Anything!" she agreed quickly. And clinging to his arm, she looked up into his face. "George," she said, breathing fast, "I'm frightened now! The—the law frightens me. I was looking at Gibbs this morning, and thinking that Torrens and the car were just outside, and that we had all the money in the world, and yet that I couldn't—I couldn't go up to him and say: 'Come on, Gibbs, let it all go—come home with me!'—That no power on earth could do that now!"

"Why, you mustn't let the atmosphere of the Court get on your nerves," he soothed her. "Just say to yourself that those fellows are good enough at heart—they're only doing what they're paid to do——"

"Not that Ryan!" she shuddered.

"Ryan? He's a decent enough fellow, Ellen."

"But, George—he's determined to—to convict Gibbs!"

"Well, but that's his business, my dear. He's obliged to take that side."

"Oh, my God, I think that is terrible!" Ellen said. "I don't see how a decent man could do it!"

The trial lasted for only a day less than three weeks. Ellen had moved her place to Gibbs's side, and although they rarely spoke, she knew he was as much comforted as she was by this arrangement. Day after day the papers described the tall, haggard man, with his sombre eyes and silver hair, and the silent, black-clad little wife, always at his side, her blue Irish eyes jealously following every word that was said to convict him or acquit him.

For two days, cruel and exhausting days, she was on the stand. Mary Cutter and George Lathrop were amazed at the courage and strength she found for the ordeal. She had promised them she would not break down, but she did for a moment, when Tommy's name was mentioned. And perhaps that moment, when the sensitive mouth quivered, and the blue eyes brimmed with tears, was as favourable to Gibbs's cause as any logic or any eloquence could have been.

For it slowly became evident that no eloquence and no logic could avail in defense of a man, young and rich and handsome, who had turned from this devoted little wife to another woman, who had quarrelled with the generous father who was that other woman's husband, who had threatened and brooded over the quarrel.

Day after day the net tightened about him. Ellen, listening and watching, sometimes felt as if she were in an oppressive dream. Oh, it could not be Gibbs who was trapped here; it could not be Tommy's father who was the chief figure in one of the sensational murder trials of the day!

"George—I keep thinking—if we could only have the trial all over again!" she said feverishly, more than once. "I can't *believe* that it's gotten—gotten so far!"

"My dear girl, this is only the *beginning* of the fight!" George would answer cheerfully. But she knew him too well to be heartened by his confident manner.

On the afternoon before the final summing-up, when all the testimony was in, and it remained only for the prisoner's counsel and the District Attorney to present to the jury their versions of the case, Ellen was spending an hour with Gibbs. As usual, she had come to him after the Court adjourned, forcing herself to speak of the little incidents of the day, and to construe them as encouraging. Gibbs, who usually made some effort to second her in this forlorn bravery, was nervous and despondent to-day, and looked ill. His months of confinement and mental distress had affected his constitution, and a poor appetite and wakeful nights had added to the misery of his situation.

"I jump from one extreme to the other, Ellen," he told her. "Sometimes I think they'll bring in a verdict of guilty—plain and flat. And—it's funny!—but I don't worry about the far future, the sentence, you know, and all that. But, by God, I feel that if I have to come back here to this room, and have those accursed men walk me back and forth any longer, I can't—I can't bear it! And then sometimes, I let myself think that all this has impressed them more favourably than we—than we fear, you know, and that I'll walk out of the room a free man—with my girl on my arm——"

His voice broke, and Ellen burst into bitter sobbing. He put his arms about her, and kissed the top of her soft hair.

"Look here, dear," he said, after a while, "I want to

talk to you for a few minutes. We don't know what's ahead of us, and I want to say this while I have a chance. To-morrow night we may be separated—oh, I know George talks of a new trial, and all that, but I'll feel happier if we've had this talk."

They sat down on the bed, side by side, and he locked his arm about her.

"One thing I want to say is this," Gibbs said, slowly, "I wasn't a good husband to you, this last year, but it was only that I was a fool, Ellen. I never was untrue to you even in my thoughts."

"I know it!" she said fervently, raising her wet eyes to meet his. "Oh, Gibbs, my own sweetheart," she burst out, her eyes brimming again, "what haven't you given me?—a little country girl who never had anything in her life until you came along! Paris, and my boy, and my little girl—and your love, Gibbs, that made life seem a miracle to me——!"

"Don't cry, Ellen," he pleaded, and she made herself be calm again.

"There's one thing more I want to say," Gibbs said. He got up and walked about the little room, Ellen watching him distressedly. Suddenly she got up, and he stopped his restless pacing, and stood looking down at her with a shadow of his old smile. "I want you to remember this," he said, "and when you tell the boy about it, tell him this, too. I've no reason to lie to you, Ellen, and what I'm telling you I say as if I were a—a dying man. It may be my last talk with you, and I think—I think of that, when I say it. I think of what you have done for me, and of what you are to me. By my mother's memory, Ellen, and by the memory of the little girl—we named for her!—

I never fired that shot. I never had my hand on that revolver in my life!"

For a minute she stared at him without a change of expression. Then he saw an extraordinary look almost of madness come into her eyes, and saw her breast rise with one great breath. She had been ghastly pale to-day, had seemed at the limit of her strength. But now the colour flooded her face. She made an effort to speak, with dry lips, and failed, made a second, and succeeded.

"Gibbs!" she stammered, in a whisper. "You—you!" Her voice failed her, and she made a gesture as if for air, still clinging tightly to his arm, which she had grasped when first he spoke. "You say you didn't——!" Ellen whispered, with a sudden pitiful trembling of her lips. "But, Gibbs—but, Gibbs—why didn't you tell me so before?" And suddenly she slipped to her knees, and he felt her face, streaming with tears, pressed against his hands. "Oh, my God, I thank Thee!" he heard her sob. "Oh, my God, I thank Thee!"

A second later she was upon her feet, pressing against him as she clasped his hands, and looked with wet eyes into his face. She was trying to laugh through the sobs that racked her.

"You didn't do it—my darling!" she said, again and again. "You didn't do it—I always knew that you didn't!"

"But, Ellen," he said, holding her tightly, and almost dazed by her vehemence, "you didn't think that I did it, dear?"

"No, I didn't think so!" she said, sobbing more quietly, and interrupting herself to laugh, and to press

her wet face against his for one of her quick kisses. "But, Gibbs, I've *thirsted* so to have you tell me just that—I needed your word to help me! I felt as if I was all alone! Now—now it'll all be so different! I don't mind anything, now. I——" She laughed again, broke into quick tears, and buried her face against his shoulder. "I'm so happy!" she sobbed. "L-l-let me cry, Gibbs. I'm crying because I feel so much happier!"

Abruptly she stopped. A bewildered look was in her eyes as she drew herself away from him, and faced him, still holding his arms. She stared blankly at him for a moment; then the clear brows met in a puzzled frown.

"Gibbs," she said, in a whisper, "who *did* do it?"

CHAPTER XVII

WHO did do it? The question burned like a fever in Ellen's veins, and her passionate determination to answer it swept all lesser consideration from her mind. George, amazed at her sudden energy and vitality, could only be glad that this unexpected stimulus had come to her at this particular time. Her whole manner changed: her air in the court-room was newly dignified and resolute, and although her devotion to Gibbs had never failed him, she poured into it now so convincing a flood of hope and determination that she could not but affect him. Her attitude to him, George and Mary to a great degree, and the world to a lesser one, found infinitely touching and wonderful.

She could face anything now. Somebody, other than Gibbs, had fired that shot. And she was Gibbs's wife, and she was free to search, and hunt, and study the strange facts surrounding old Thomas Josselyn's death, until somehow, somewhere, her hand fell upon the thread that should lead her to the truth. Her simple faith that the truth must come to light helped them all.

It helped her through the dark hours when, still heartsick over the bitter arraignment of the District Attorney, and exhausted after the strain of the last terrible weeks, she and George and Gibbs sat waiting, hour after hour, for the verdict. The five hours had seemed as many years to Ellen, but she never lost her newer, deeper hope for the future.

George had warned them what to expect; every event of the trial had warned them. Ellen knew that George was already desperately seeking for some technicality upon which to demand a new trial.

"If we could find someone who saw Gibbs on that walk that night!" George said.

"We will!" Ellen assured him confidently. "Gibbs," she added, tightening the hand that lay over his own, "don't you feel it? Don't you *know* that you and I will look back at this sometime as a dark, hideous dream? I *know* it!"

And yet she had turned dizzy when an officer coming quietly to the door cell announced that the jury had found a verdict. She put her hand on Gibbs's shoulder, and raised her ashen face for his kiss. They had time for no words, even if there had been words to say. Blindly Ellen followed George to the court-room. With quick efficiency the officials were filling their places. The faithful newspaper men, their dinners left to cool, hurried in.

It was seven o'clock; the cold February dark had closed down hours ago. The court-room was brightly lighted, and warm. His Honour, who had also been dining, came in. He had addressed this same jury in his kind, wise voice five hours ago. After Ryan's furious tones he had seemed all temperance and justice to Ellen. He had advised them that the killing of a human being when committed from a deliberate and premeditated design is murder in the first degree; when committed with design, but without deliberation or premeditation, is murder in the second degree; any other homicide is manslaughter in one of its degrees. These degrees, his cool voice had continued, were two:

excusable homicide, from accident, or justifiable homicide, in self-defense. He had charged them that if there was a reasonable doubt as to whether the crime of murder in the first degree had been committed, they were in duty bound to give the prisoner the benefit of that doubt, and to find for murder in the second degree, or manslaughter.

Now the old man looked benignly over his glasses at the twelve tired men who filed back into the box. And Ellen looked from face to face with agonized surmise.

The blow fell with merciful quickness. It was only a few minutes before the whole thing was over. Gibbs preserved the quiet dignity of manner that had marked him all through the trial. If a sickening fear of the future swept over him he gave no sign of it. He looked with concern toward his wife, but Ellen had mercifully lost consciousness, and had quietly dropped against George's shoulder.

She recovered immediately, and they saw Gibbs again: a criminal now, convicted of murder in the second degree. All the freedom of their recent intercourse would be ended, she had foreseen that. What else had she foreseen? The indignities of shaven head and striped clothes, the filth and ugliness of the prison, the locked cell door, the terrible atmosphere that surrounds men for whom there is no place in the green world!

But she came up to him smiling.

"We expected that, Sweetheart, didn't we? It doesn't matter. You didn't do it, and it will all come right some day. Try not to think of it now—think of the time to come. Just lift yourself out of all this——"

"Oh, we'll make a fight of it!" George added. Immediately afterward he took Ellen away.

They went to the Port Washington house, and George came in to talk to her aunt and grandfather. Ellen hardly spoke. She went to the door, to say good-night to him, and thank him. He thought she looked ill.

But she was in her place in the court-room a few days later when Thomas Gibbs Josselyn was sentenced to penal servitude for the term of his natural life, for the peculiarly atrocious crime of murdering his own father.

"And somehow, one lives through it all, George," Gibbs said later. He was behind bars now, but astonishingly serene and strong. He was nervously anxious to have the events of the next week over, when he should be transferred to the big prison. "I want you to take Tommy, and get away from all this, Ellen," he said, firmly. "Write me, and send me pictures——"

"Oh, Gibbs——!" she whispered, with a sudden stoppage of breath.

"Yes, I know," he said quickly, sympathetic for her distress. "But you must remember this. If I can think of you, living quietly somewhere, not too unhappy, it's going to brace me. I'm not any better than lots of other fellows who have been up against it, Ellen. And if, as you say, something new comes to light, why then we'll be glad we faced the music with some—some decency, don't you see? Now take her away, George. I don't like her to be here."

"I have never seen a man change as Gibbs has changed," George said, as they drove home. "I am amazed at him. Always fastidious, exacting, auto-

cratic—he's got a new viewpoint now. Well, now, we've got to do our share. We mustn't lose heart. The game isn't up yet, by a good deal."

Like Gibbs, Ellen was impatient to have these few days over. She knew that she would be strong to face the hard stretch beyond them, when, alone and disheartened, she must take up her fight for his liberty and his name. But she could not gauge her present strength for the hideous ordeal of parting with him, and of having Tommy say good-bye to his father. Her soul shrank from the mere thought, and she dreaded a breakdown on her part, or on Gibbs's, that should undo them all.

Lizzie had written her every day: of the pretty house they had found in Bridgeport, of the walks and talks she had with Tommy, and of Joe and his new work. These letters at first had been ungrammatical, and full of errors in spelling, but presently Ellen noticed a great improvement. Lizzie had hit upon the heroic expedient of asking Joe to correct them for her. Ellen looked for them eagerly. The little stories of Tommy, the assurance that he was well and happy, the pictures of a well-capped and wrapped Tommy playing in a glitter of snow, were an interest for Gibbs as well as herself.

She tried to visualize the home: Lizzie silent, always busy, Joe coming in tired and hungry, to romp with the inexhaustible nephew. New work, new scenes, a new family, how were these affecting the little brother? Between the lines she could read that the human lives, so suddenly uprooted, had not yet found their new soil kindly.

"Joe works almost every evening," wrote Lizzie, in a letter not corrected by Joe, "and he takes Tommy out with him on Sunday. He always asks me will I go, too, but I feel so badly about his having me always to think about that sometimes I don't go. Now that I am married, I can see that I should never have let him talk me into it, for he is lonely here. But perhaps it is partly worry about you, for we can't think of nothing else but that.

"He eats well, and so does Tommy. And Tommy is so old-fashioned that he is like having a grown person to talk to. I don't know what I would do without him. He says to tell you he made a chocolate custard, and Uncle Joe bought him a bow and arrows."

Joe never wrote, but both Joe and Lizzie brought Tommy to Port Washington in answer to Ellen's wire a day after the sentence had been pronounced. The child looked rosy and well, and leaped into his mother's arms, instantly distracted from his first embraces by her unfamiliar clothing.

"Why 'j'buy all black things, Mother?"

"Because Grandpa is dead, Sweetheart."

"Grandpa is!" he ejaculated. He pointed to the old Captain in the adjoining room. "There's Grandpa!"

"Dad's father, Tom. You remember Grandpa Josselyn, with the gold glasses?"

"Is he dead?" said the child, in a sweet, incurious voice.

"You start your stumps out here, Tom, and come and eat something!" Aunt Elsie said from the doorway. "It's a long trip, for a child, and lunch or no lunch, I should think you'd both like some milk and gingerbread to stay your stomachs. How are you, Lizzie?"

"Oh, I'm fine!" Lizzie, who looked badly, said mildly.

"Is she really?" Ellen asked, when the old woman had taken Tommy and Lizzie into the kitchen. "I've been wondering. It seems ages since we talked together, Joe. I would have gone to the city, to meet you and Tom, but I'm such a target now——" She sighed wearily. "I hate it all so! But tell me about Lizzie."

"She's all right." He smiled, ruefully. "She's a sad little thing!"

"Sad?"

"Yep. She cries, and she's sorry she's wrecked my life: all that sort of thing."

"And *do* you feel your life wrecked, Joe?" Ellen asked with a great ache at her heart for his quiet, hopeless tone.

"Oh, no!" he said impatiently and gruffly. "What's the difference, anyway?"

"Joe," Ellen said hesitatingly. "I'm—sorry."

"I'm sorry for the whole thing," he echoed. "It's a rotten morality that makes a girl feel that there's no going back. No matter how sorry, and how good, she is, there's always the feeling—why, Ellen, I know respectable girls in this town that aren't fit to tie Lizzie's shoes! Girls clever enough to make their bargains in cold blood—so much loving for a ring and an income for life! Lizzie's a loving little thing—she was starved for someone to really care for—she reached out for love the way a scared kid might reach out for a kitten! And now she'll never feel herself quite like the others"—he gave his sister a dubious smile—"she hasn't let me put my arm about her!" he confided.

"Hasn't!" she echoed, amazed.

"No." Joe smiled, got to his feet, and sighed. "It's a fine old world!" he remarked drily. And then with an abrupt change of subject: "I'm so sorry for all this, Sis. I wish to God I could spare you this afternoon. When do we go?"

"George calls at three," she answered quietly. "I think I can get through it thinking of Gibbs. I'm praying—I'm praying—that I can! It's the last pull, you know—and after this—after this I can faint or be sick or do anything else, for awhile!"

Wearily, she turned to go upstairs with Lizzie and Tommy. Tommy was to lie down and have a favourite book read to him for an hour: the little boy was presumably tired from his trip. Ellen left him when George arrived, and came downstairs.

George, coming in at the hall door, and Joe, who opened it to him, and Aunt Elsie, who came to the dining-room door to greet him, looked at her in amazement and vague alarm. Her face was pale, she was breathing hard, and there was a strange, feverish glitter in her blue eyes; she made a wild gesture that detained them all, and caught George by the wrist. He was instantly given the impression of exhaustion, of desperate determination to say what must be said, before the collapse.

To Ellen the air seemed suddenly thick and soft: she felt it pressing against her.

"No—wait a minute, Auntie!—George—and Joe, too—come in here—don't go!" she stammered. She half-dragged, half-led them into the little parlour. "All stay," she said in a dry whisper. Joe had run for a glass of water, and now knelt beside the chair into which George had put her, and held it to her lips.

"Thanks, dear," she whispered. Her eyes moved about from face to face, and her lips moved drily. Then suddenly she made a great struggle, as if for air.

"My God, she's dying!" Mrs. Baldwin exclaimed. But Ellen herself answered her:

"No, Auntie—no, I'm all right!" And tightening one hand on Joe's, and with the other clinging to George, she said at last: "I've found out who did it, George! I know who fired that shot!"

A silence spread like a fog over the little sitting room. They all looked at her without speaking.

"I'll tell you about it——" Ellen said, after another drink of water. "It happened—I mean my learning about it—half an hour ago. But I didn't dare do anything until George got here." She had so far recovered her composure that she could rise now, and she spoke in an almost normal tone. "George," she said, "I want you to sit here, and Joe and Auntie, will you go into the back room: just behind the curtains, so that you can hear everything?" And, as they bewilderedly but eagerly obeyed her instructions, she stepped to the hall door, and called "Lizzie!"

Immediately Lizzie came downstairs, as white as Ellen was, with Tommy clinging to her hand. The little boy came running in to his mother, and Ellen caught him in her arms.

"Here's Uncle George, dear!" she said. Tommy indifferently felt himself drawn between the man's knees. George looked dazedly at Ellen. "Now, Tom," his mother said casually, "I want you to do something for me. And if you do it nicely, I'm going to read to you for—one—whole—hour—to-night!"

"Will you really, Moth'?" Tommy asked, his eyes dancing.

"Yes, I truly will. Tommy, I want you to tell Uncle George about that night at Wheatley Hills, when you came down—you know—tell him all about it!"

Tommy was looking at her with a guilty child's doubt of his reception.

"Grandpa told me to!" he asserted, in self-defense. "I was a captain, and he *told* me to!"

George glanced at Ellen: they exchanged one look.

"I was telling Tommy a little about the reason why we left Wheatley Hills," Ellen explained. "And he told me why he liked Wheatley Hills. Go on, dear."

Tommy, encircled by George's arm, had his mouth close to the man's ear. He spoke in a half-proud, half-shamed voice.

"I said I was sorry about Grandpa, because I liked to play in his study! And I said he let me fire his pistol."

Again the man and woman exchanged a look of consternation.

"Come! A kid like you couldn't fire a real pistol," George said scoffingly.

"Well, I *did* fire it!" Tommy burst out boastfully. "With two fingers on the trigger! I said I was a captain and he said I oughtenter be afraid of my gun. I fired it two times. He told me to!" Tommy illustrated with a dramatic gesture.

Ellen saw George swallow, with a dry throat. She heard him whisper "My God!"

"But, Tom—how's that? You mean to tell me you

fired the revolver like that about the room?" he asked the child.

"Well-a," Tommy stammered, "it never went off those first two times; it didn't make any noise. And he said 'Good boy, old Tommy!'"

Ellen caught a quick breath. She had heard him call the child that a hundred times.

"He said, 'Good boy!'" George repeated, "and then you pointed it at him?"

"No, then he told me about spies. He told me all about them. And then I said, 'If you were a spy, Grandpa, I'd fix *you!*' And he said, 'All right. I'm a spy. I surrender.' And he said to me I must say, 'Have you anything to say for—that——,'" Tommy stumbled. "Why he shouldn't be shot, you know," he explained.

"I see," George said, glancing at Ellen.

"So I said that, and he said no, he didn't have, and I took the pistol again and shot at him. But *that* time," Tommy went on serenely, "It *did* go off! I thought it had burst. And some smoke came out. And Grandpa sat—like this——"

He dropped into a chair in terrible verisimilitude to the still form they had found in the study, three months ago. Ellen glanced again at George: he was as pale as she.

"And then what, Tom?"

"Then I went over to him, and shook his arm, and he didn't wake up. I thought he was fooling. And I took the pistol and threw it away in the basket. I said: 'Grandpa, *please* wake up!' but he wouldn't. So I ran to the door and called for Lizzie. I called seventy or twenty-five times, I guess."

"I see. I see, of course, but tell me," said George, "where *was* Lizzie?"

"Why, she was up in Mother's room. I wasn't sure that Grandpa was fooling, though maybe he was. I was afraid purraps I'd hurt him——"

"Then why didn't you run and tell your mother at once if you thought so?"

"Well-a, I didn't think I could have hurt him much because he didn't say 'Ouch' or anything," Tommy elucidated cheerfully. "And then I thought maybe Lizzie would be cross at me for getting out of bed."

"Getting out of bed?"

"Yes, when I went downstairs. She said she'd tell my father if I did it again. But she was still in Mother's room when I got upstairs, so I got into bed and thought I'd tell her Grandpa wanted to see her when she came back."

"And why didn't you, Tommy?"

"I don't remember. I guess I went to sleep."

"And what made you go downstairs in the first place, Tommy?" his mother asked, her voice trembling in spite of her effort for control.

"I couldn't go to sleep because you and Lizzie were talking so loud and Lizzie was crying. I got up to get a drink in the bathroom and I looked out into the hall, the door was open—and Grandpa was there and I asked him what he was doing and he said he was sending a telegram——"

"Yes, that's perfectly correct," George said. "We found it on the hall table."

"So then he said 'Come on down and pay me a visit, old scout!' and I went. And Mother told me next day he was sick," Tommy went on pleasantly, as he worked busily with the swivel of George's watch chain, "so purraps that was when he was *beginning* to feel a little

bit sick! If I was a spy, and they caught *me*," Tommy added vaingloriously, "I'd shoot so fast, and my horse would ride so fast, that I'd get away from *them*, whether they liked it or not! I'd——"

"Listen, Tom," George said. "Down at my place at Sands Point, do you know what I've got? I've got a shaggy little gentleman who came from the Isle of Shetland——"

"A pony!" Tommy whispered, his eyes alight. "Mother, has he really got a pony?" he asked, digging his dark hair into his mother's shoulder, and smiling in bashful delight.

"I suppose he has," Ellen answered, smiling.

"And that pony," George said impressively, "will be your pony if you'll do something for me!"

Tommy glanced at his mother, actually pale with joy.

"Mother—he is going to give me that pony!" he said, on an excited breath. "Oh, Mother, can I have a pony? He can stay at Hewlett's," he decided swiftly. "Until we can have a little stable built for him! I could build it—or if a man came to do some of it, I could help him! All you need is planks and nails——"

"But how about doing something for me?" George asked.

"Sure!" said Tommy, in the manlike, careless voice befitting the owner of a pony. "I'll do anything."

"I want you to come over to Mineola with Mother and me," George said. "And tell all this to a man there —a friend of mine—all about your grandfather, you know, and the whole thing!"

"Why?" asked Tommy, round-eyed.

"That's just what I don't want you to ask, Tommy, and just what I can't very well explain to you. *I*

don't ask *you* why you want this pony," George said pointedly. "Now this man will ask you lots of questions," he went on, "and you must answer them. And if you can't remember anything, just say so."

"All right!" Tommy agreed indifferently. "Has he got a saddle?"

"Mother's going to give you a saddle," Ellen promised. She called Lizzie. "Lizzie, will you take Tommy upstairs and read to him, and talk about the pony?" she asked, with a significant look. And when they were gone she turned to George, and she and George and Joe stared at each other.

"That is the most extraordinary thing that has come to me in the entire course of my profession," George said, slowly, as if he had been stunned. "I must get hold of Ryan at once. There's a point or two—what do you make of his saying he fired the pistol twice?"

"Lizzie's story agrees with that! She had loaded it with only one shell," Ellen supplied quickly. "All the chambers but one were empty!"

"It was like the old man—I could hear his voice," George mused, "'I surrender!' If I can get hold of Ryan! Ellen, could you take the child over there at once?"

"Anything—anywhere!" Her face clouded. "But, George, they won't take that baby into court—they won't cross-examine Tommy?"

"No—no!" he said, smiling. "He'll simply talk to him, and it will be taken down. You may trust Tommy to me."

"And, George—do you think?—is there any hope? Might they really clear Gibbs for a thing like this?"

He put a hand on her shoulder, as she stood looking fearfully up at him. Ellen never forgot the joy, the tenderness, the sympathy in his eyes.

"My dear girl—my dear girl—I think that in a few days Gibbs will walk into this house with you to have dinner with the Captain and Aunt Elsie!"

The ecstasy of real hope, after the weeks of pretence! The joy of action and hurry after so many days when there had been nothing to do! It was a lowering winter day, but to Ellen it seemed as if the sun of June were shining.

She ran upstairs, and while she and Lizzie and Tommy chattered of the pony, her tones sang. She dropped beside her old bed, to bury her burning face and throbbing brain in her arms, and pray. And going past Aunt Elsie's door she saw the old woman on her knees, too, and the grizzled head bent against a gayly coloured "Log Cabin" quilt. Ellen went in, they laughed and wept together.

"Whatever 'tis, Ellen, you must pray to be resigned, dear! But I hope and trust the good Lord, who knows what's best for us all, has seen fit to lift your burden!" said Aunt Elsie.

"I keep saying to myself that we'll know in a few hours," Lizzie murmured, tying Tommy's Windsor tie under his firm, round little chin. "Don't put that pencil in your mouth, Tommy, now that your face is all clean!"

"Lord, you couldn't stand this sort of strain long!" Joe remarked, when they were all in the Lathrop limousine.

"Please God we won't have to stand it long," George

said, quietly. Ellen, glancing at the face she had grown to love and trust, knew that he was stirred to the deeps of his soul.

It was a strange drive, over snowy roads, and between bare fields. The trees were leafless, the world hushed under a sky of lead. It was Sunday, and in the villages young people were laughing and talking, as they lounged about station platforms and candy stores. But there was no life on the roads, except when a trolley-car, loaded with visiting women and babies, whined upon its way.

Tommy talked incessantly, and everybody talked to Tommy with unusual graciousness. Every foot of the eight-mile trip had long ago become drearily familiar to Ellen, on her daily drives to and fro, but it had never seemed as long as it did to-day. Yet they were not twenty minutes on their way.

"George," she said, at parting on the court-house steps, "I had better not say anything to Gibbs?"

"I certainly would," he answered, after a moment's thought.

"Then—then you're pretty sure, George?"

They exchanged a long look. The man nodded.

"So sure," he answered, "that I would not take Tommy to see him to-day. I wouldn't have that association in Tommy's mind, it seems to me."

"Oh, George—but I can't believe it!" she said dizzily. "If anything happens now—I don't think I can bear it!"

"I don't think anything will, Ellen," he said in his quiet way. "Lizzie had better come with me, for they might keep us waiting, and I don't want Tommy to be frightened." He gave the child his hand. "Come on,

Tommy!" he said. "You come with us, Lizzie, will you? By the way, what are you going to name your pony?"

Ellen watched them up the steps. Then she turned to Joe, and the hideous atmosphere of the jail enveloped them. Ellen went quickly through the familiar doors and gates.

"Will you wait here, Joe?" she asked, as they came to a sort of central hallway where a sergeant sat reading at a desk. And with a pathetic little attempt at apology, which he found infinitely touching, she added: "Gibbs will want to see you when he hears the good news—if it is good news! But just now he doesn't like to see any one but me."

She greeted the man at the desk with a quiet sort of dignity that impressed her brother.

"You haven't got the little boy?" the sergeant asked.

"No," she said, flustered. "I—we thought it better not to bring him!"

The man looked grave, came about his desk, and said something in a low tone of which Joe only caught the words "to-morrow morning." Ellen answered with a nervous murmur of assent.

Two young men who were waiting rather ostentatiously near by came up to her, and she spoke to them with patient courtesy.

"No, I did not bring the little boy to-day!" Joe heard her say, smiling faintly but with evident distress at the interruption, and turning as she spoke as if to end the conversation. One of the young men detained her with an imploring touch of his fingers on her sleeve.

"Just one moment—I'm so sorry to trouble you!" he said, with desperate and reluctant eagerness. "Will

you tell me—just this one thing—did Ryan come here, just now, to meet Mr. Lathrop?"

She looked at him bewilderedly.

"Yes—I think I may say that!"

"*Did!*" both of the young men exclaimed, exulting. "Then—then there's some chance of a new trial?"

"I—really, I couldn't say." Ellen looked about as if for escape. "But if you will wait until I see Mr. Lathrop—you've all been so kind!——" she murmured, appealingly. Joe, remembering his own brief newspaper experience, could imagine the excitement with which the press men would await a possible "break" in the famous Josselyn case, as they returned to their waiting.

Ellen turned, and went hastily away, Joe watching her go: the big jail was very still in the winter afternoon.

She was familiar with every step of the way, now, the small corridor smelling of cement, the longer corrider beyond, the door of Gibbs's cell. It was unlocked for her, she always went inside.

The first few minutes with him, when she became afresh accustomed to the appalling atmosphere of the jail, were always terrible to Ellen. To-day, as she reached Gibbs, her trembling confidence and new-born hope shrivelled, and she had a sickening sensation of doubt. Could anything—*anything*—prevail against the power of these dark walls, this inhuman machine?

He was sitting on his bed, in the narrow space, and she sat beside him. He looked ill and wretched, and did not rise as she came in, nor move except to raise his haggard eyes. The guard, at the door, walked away.

"Hello, dear," Gibbs said lifelessly. "Did Tommy come?"

"I had an order from the Court that you might come into the sergeant's office to see Tommy," Ellen answered, trembling so violently that she was hardly conscious of what she was saying. "But, Gibbs, we thought it best not to bring him."

He nodded, looking down at his clasped hands. Ellen gave the dropped patient head, the beautiful idle fingers, and the whole drooping figure a look of infinite compassion.

"But you don't ask me why we decided that," she said, in smiling accusation.

Instead of answering he raised his hand, with her own still resting on it, and she saw her fingers shaking.

"Poor little Ellen!" he said tenderly.

His tone brought tears to her eyes, and she made a quick gesture of impatience. She must not cry now.

"Gibbs, dear," she said, her tone quivering treacherously. "The reason was, that George thinks he has new evidence."

"I knew he was trying to find some," Gibbs said wearily.

"You know, I'm so afraid of going into hysterics, or fainting, or something," Ellen said childishly. "That I want you not to say you don't believe me when I tell you something."

"George really hopes for a new trial, hey?" Gibbs mused. "This jury was out five hours, Ellen—they were five for murder in the first degree, on the first ballot. I—I can't see that old George is right in pushing this thing to the wall——"

"Look at me, dear," Ellen said, taking both his hands. "Look at me. Try to understand what I am saying.

We think—we think—that—the—the murderer has confessed."

"*You think!*" he echoed, his tone suddenly harsh. "What do you mean? Don't you *know?*"

"We will know," she said, trembling. "We will know in a little while now. Gibbs, I'll tell you just how it all came about. Lizzie and Joe and Tommy came down from Bridgeport this morning, and it was while I was keeping Tommy quiet—for it's a long trip for a child—that he suddenly said something about Grandpa. Lizzie and I were not listening exactly, but the words seemed to come back to me—as words do, you know, and I said, as quietly as I could, 'What did you say Grandpa let you do?'

"He said 'Fire his revolver!'" Ellen's words fell in a tense silence. Gibbs looked at her with awakening eyes.

"My God—my God!" he whispered.

"Well, we looked at him, and I was so afraid I'd frighten him, or make him self-conscious, that I could hardly get any voice. But Lizzie asked him when this was, and he told us the whole thing. That he had wandered to the top of the stairs in his nightgown, and Grandpa was walking across the lower hall: he had just put a telegram on the hall table, for Torrens to take in the morning, and he called Tom down. Tommy said that he wanted to play with the chessmen, and he opened the table drawer—Gibbs, you would be amazed how clearly he told it! He said Grandpa was sitting in that very chair, and Gibbs, he even took the attitude——! He said that he saw the pistol, and Grandpa said, 'Take it out, Tommy, it's not loaded.'"

"He couldn't possibly have loaded it, dear, with

Dad looking on. And my father surely wouldn't have had it loaded——!"

"But, Gibbs, Lizzie had loaded it that morning!"

"God!" Gibbs said again, under his breath.

"And this part, Gibbs, is so strange! He fired it twice, your father directing him. He fired first at some target over the mantel, and then somewhere else——"

"Couldn't pull the trigger——!" Gibbs said breathlessly.

"Oh, indeed he *did!* He fired twice, but you see those chambers were empty. And, Gibbs, he says that Grandpa said to him 'Good old Tommy!' You remember how he used to say that? Then they had some talk about soldiers, and finally your father was a spy—and the amazing thing is, Gibbs, to hear Tommy tell it—every few minutes he would put in something that the testimony had developed, and Lizzie and I would look at each other! I couldn't *realize* it—the importance of it, but I knew George was on his way, and that he would know! Well, and then Tom got frightened, and he tried to rouse your father, and threw the pistol in the basket, and ran out and called for Lizzie. But Lizzie, of course, didn't hear. He wasn't sure whether your father was fooling or not, but the noise of the report had frightened him. He was afraid he'd be scolded for getting out of bed and going downstairs so when he found Lizzie was not in the room, he got into bed and before she came in, he fell asleep. The next day, of course, we carefully kept any of the excitement from him——"

"What does George think about it?"

"Well, I don't know. But he telephoned the Dis-

trict Attorney immediately, and Ryan is here now talking to George, and to Tommy. Oh, Gibbs—Gibbs!" she broke off feverishly. "It's made me—I can't tell you—so nervous!—I can't *tell* you——"

"I know!" he interrupted nervously. "We mustn't allow ourselves to think about it——!"

"Could a child Tommy's age testify, Gibbs?"

"I don't know, dear."

"And—if they believe this, does it mean a new trial?"

"It might, I don't know."

"We can only wait." Ellen tightened her fingers on his, and they sat silent.

A messenger came to the officer at the cell's door who spoke a moment later to Ellen. Would Mrs. Josselyn step into the warden's office a minute, to speak to Mr. Lathrop? Ellen, with one quick flutter of breath, smiled a good-bye to Gibbs, and was gone.

In the warden's office she found George and the District Attorney.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Josselyn," Ryan said. Ellen, smiling faintly, tried to read his rosy, complacent face. "This is a most extraordinary turn of events," he said. "This little fellow had the secret up his sleeve all the time, eh?"

Ellen felt almost faint with the revulsion this change in his manner gave her. Ryan had always been sharp, suspicious, menacing, before. She wanted to ask: "You believe it, then?" but quick intuition told her that that must wait. So she asked instead:

"Tommy talked, did he? He answered your questions?"

"He is an extremely intelligent child," Ryan remarked. "Gave his testimony like a little man. Nothing that we could say could shake him."

"Not that Mr. Ryan was very hard on him," George smiled. "He certainly has the right manner with a child."

Ellen knew that George never wasted words. She was quick to take her cue.

"You have children, Mr. Ryan?"

"I have three—three girls." The District Attorney's voice, the voice that she had heard so sharp and harsh, was soft and tender now.

"This is a smart little fellow of yours," he continued. "We put him through a pretty sharp half-hour. He stuck to it. I—I won't deny that I think this changes the entire aspect of affairs, Mrs. Josselyn. I've already advised the sheriff to delay the—the transfer of Mr. Josselyn."

"There may be a new trial?" Ellen asked, trembling. For answer Daniel Ryan smiled at her, and there was something so kindly, so reassuring, in that red face, when it smiled, that she felt a melting, a breaking up of coldness and hate, in her heart. Hate changed suddenly to love and fear changed to confidence. Ellen experienced the most poignant of all human emotions.

"We may not even have it go to trial," George supplied.

"May not?" she echoed, choking.

"No," Ryan confirmed it. "There is no question for a jury. I don't know of a parallel case," he said thoughtfully. "But I should suppose that it would only be necessary to put this evidence before the Court, with suitable testimony to its genuineness,

to have the whole case dismissed!" He turned to the warden. "May we see Mr. Josselyn?" he asked, with the quiet manner of a man making a request sure to be granted.

"Where is Tom?" Ellen asked, while they waited.

"We sent him home, with Lizzie. Mr. Ryan asked her not to let him talk about this matter, and you'll see to that, too, Ellen?"

"We might need him again," Ryan said.

Gibbs, followed by the inevitable guard, came in, and they turned to him. His silver crest was, as always, as smooth as satin, but he looked ill-groomed and haggard; worst of all, he looked beaten. There were lead-coloured circles about his dark, anxious eyes, and his manner had a certain nervous apprehensiveness that was unlike its old imperial certainty. He had been overpowered, disbelieved, he had been triumphantly convicted of one of the most hideous crimes in the calendar of crime, he faced years—twenty interminable years or all the rest of his life—of moral and mental degradation, of social ostracism. This brisk, positive District Attorney was master here.

"Mr. Josselyn," Ryan said, "has your wife informed you that we have found some most important testimony bearing upon your case?"

"You regard it so, Mr. Ryan?" Gibbs said lifelessly.

"I regard it as more than important. I regard it as so vital that I feel free to congratulate you upon it, Mr. Josselyn, upon a miraculous escape from an error of the law. And I hope to God," Ryan added, "that we will soon find means to get you out of here!"

"I thank you," Gibbs answered briefly. But Ellen saw his lip tremble.

"Gibbs—my dear, dear boy!" George stammered, taking both his hands.

Ellen had a quick sensation of faintness and nausea. She looked bravely at George, and smiled waveringly.

"We—we mustn't be too sure——" she stammered. A moment later the harsh, whitewashed walls and the rodded doors, the warden's desk, and the tall, bare windows, vanished. She saw them all blur together, like a picture in a bubble, and, like the bubble, suddenly become flecked with widening black spots. Then everything was black.

CHAPTER XVIII

On a quiet September morning, about a year and a half later, a young man, his pretty wife, and their very small baby, got out of the long train of dusty Pullman coaches at the dry, sleepy little California town of Los Antonios. From the station platform, with eyes eager for new impressions, they looked down the small straggling Main Street, where "The Red Front" dry-goods store, the "Palace Picture Plays," and "The L'Accomodacion" millinery, in their hideous brightness of paint and glass, were scattered among the older adobe buildings, blank-faced buildings, with narrow porches running across the upper floors. There was a small bank, its wooden steps baking in the sunshine, just opposite the station, flanked by two open markets, where figs and sprawling grapes made an unfamiliar note among the tomatoes and peaches. Dusty farm wagons were tied along the curb, and between them stood occasional motor-cars. To these wagons a burdened man or woman sometimes made approach; various bundles and boxes were stowed away: apples, coiled rope, groceries, a great unwieldy lump from the butcher store, a smoothly wrapped armful from "The Red Front." There was lively coming and going at the post office. It chanced to be a Saturday morning, and Los Antonios was experiencing the busiest business hour of the week.

After a smiling survey of the scene, during which

they were apparently entirely unnoticed, the man crossed the street to the bank, and asked a question of the teller.

"Sure you can: you can fome from here," said that delicate, blond, moustached official pleasantly, "Fome Murphy's Garage, and they'll take you up there. The Josselyns who have the old Perry place, isn't it? Sure, it's about six miles out of town, up in the hills." He meditated a second, and then with a sudden burst of interest he added, "Say, Mrs. Josselyn was in here about a minute ago! Know her car? Her car must be right outside here."

And he obligingly stepped to the door with the newcomer, and looked up and down the street.

"That's the car," he said, indicating one that had been left empty before the post office door. "If you get in there and wait for Mrs. Josselyn, she'll be right out of somewheres. Visiting here?"

"I'm just in from New York," said the new arrival, smiling, "I'm her brother."

"That so?" The blond teller was pleased. "You'll not get any weather like this *there!*" he added complacently, going back to his cage.

Joe went across the street again, and took the baby from its mother's arms.

"That's Ellen's car, there!" he said, smiling nervously. Lizzie did not speak. Her cheeks were burning with excitement. For four months she and Joe had talked of going to California to see Ellen, but it seemed a mad dream to her still. "I can't believe we're here!" Joe echoed her thought. "In a few minutes we'll *see* her!"

"Oh, don't!" Lizzie said faintly. With the baby

on one arm, and the big suitcase in his free hand, Joe went to the waiting motor, and Lizzie, carrying the little suitcase, followed. He put his wife and baby in the tonneau, where various packages were already piled, but was too nervous himself to join them there, and walked up and down the sidewalk instead, turning his head whenever a screen-door banged, to look for Ellen.

Suddenly they saw her, in a doorway a hundred feet away, talking to some other marketing woman. The same Ellen, with her blue honest eyes, and her sensitive, sweet mouth, with white-shod feet, and a soft white hat crushed over her dark hair, and a trim little striped gingham gown showing under her loose dust coat. There was some new quality in her face and manner: what was it?—responsibility, gravity, tenderness, Joe could not tell.

He walked up to her, and she raised surprised eyes.

"Mornin', Mis' Josselyn!"

The puzzled look in her eyes changed swiftly, and she put her hands out and caught at him vaguely, as if to hold a dream. For a few seconds she held him at arm's length, staring at him amazedly, then with a little sound between laughter and tears she put her arms about him in the old way.

"Joe *Latimer!* Joe!" She groped for her handkerchief, laughing as she wiped her eyes; tears of joy stood in his own. "But Joe *dear*, what brings you here! I simply can't believe it! I can't believe my eyes!" she said.

"Lizzie brought me!" Joe grinned. Ellen dropped his hand to go swiftly to the motor-car.

"Lizzie!" she echoed radiantly. Her eyes fell upon

the bundle in Lizzie's arms, across which Lizzie must lean to return her kiss. "But—but—what!" Ellen stammered. "You—you two haven't got a *baby?*"

Joe thought that one moment was worth all the fatigue of the long trip.

"Haven't we!" he said, as Ellen, standing on the curb, with the precious bundle in her arms, opened the tissues that screened the tiny face, and bent her own cheek against the warm, unresponsive little cheek.

"And such a tiny one!" she exulted. "But how old is he? And you never wrote me a word!"

"Well, the truth was, we didn't know it ourselves until most people have got everything ready down to the last safety-pin!" Joe explained.

"And then I was so sick I didn't really dream it would all come out right!" Lizzie added eagerly. "We planned to keep it a secret until it was over. And then Joe got your birthday present, and he said, 'Lizzie, we'll take the baby out to call on Aunt Ellen!'"

"Well, I have never had such a delicious surprise in my life!" Ellen exclaimed. "You darling!" she crooned to the baby. "What did you name him, Joe?"

"We thought a good name for him would be Ellen," grinned Joe. It was good to hear her old laugh again, and see the pleasure in her eyes as she glanced from face to face.

"Named for me? My own tiny niece! Ah, Joe, you make me proud!" She gave the baby back to Lizzie, and stood for a moment, resting her hands on the car door, and still trying to regain her breath after the surprise. "Well, now, I'll take you home! I may have something else to do while I'm in town, but it has gone completely out of my head, if I have!" she

said. "Get in front with the baby, Lizzie: then the shield will screen her, and Joe can lean over and talk to us both. I can't wait to get home, to show Gibbs what I've brought with me!"

Talking of little, inconsequent things, as those who love each other, and who meet after years, always must do at first, they drove through the dusty street, and past flat fields where great oaks threw blots of shade on the shining brown grass, and so climbed a curving road into the hills. From the top, where Ellen stopped the car for a few minutes, they could look down upon the sparkling sapphire of the Pacific, and see the idle creaming waves along the rocky shore. The soft curves of the hills, falling away below them, were clad with scrub pine and cypress now; on flat green meadows by the marshes a dairy farm slept in the sunshine. When the car stood still, they could hear the sleepy, incessant murmur of the ocean.

Here and there on the slopes a brown bungalow clung, half hidden in trees. Ellen pointed at a sloping roof, halfway between the ridge and the shore.

"That's the house," she told them. "It belonged to a Mr. Perry, who knew Gibbs, you know, and he loaned it to us at first. But we loved it so we couldn't think of moving away, and a year ago Gibbs bought it."

"It's the loveliest place I ever saw!" Lizzie said, in an awed tone.

"It's a wonderful life to me," Ellen admitted thoughtfully. And as she made no motion to start the car, but sat twisted about in her seat, looking down vaguely at the sea, Joe wondered again what that new look in her eyes meant. "We can't get enough of it,"

she added. "It's all so deliciously simple, and so free: like being children again. It's taken us back to our summers in Brittany. We all sleep out, and sometimes I sleep twelve hours, and get up so wonderfully gay and fresh, just eager for breakfast, and whatever happens to be coming along, exactly like Tommy! We wander about the garden, or take our lunch down to the shore, and I pick up shells or read to Gibbs—and little things seem so big," smiled Ellen, "and the big things don't come our way at all! Gibbs gets his New York paper, six days old, and we have all the magazines, and all the books we want, and now and then, of course, we have company. George and Harriet were here in—in July, I think it was. Gibbs's friends are always going and coming through San Francisco, and they come down! And we're always providing for the day we get bored, by saying that we could go up to the city for a week," she finished cheerfully. "But somehow we don't go!"

"Lord, what air!" Joe said, with a deep breath. The sweet odour of the pines was drifting through the still warmth. From the dry fields they could hear the shrilling of grasshoppers.

"Oh, it's marvellous, Joe. December is apt to have days like this, and February is a great month for picnics!" Ellen said, eagerly. "What I wanted to say to you," she added, a little uncertainly, "was—I thought I would just tell you——"

They were appalled to hear a sudden thickening in her voice, and to see that her utmost effort could not keep her eyes from watering.

"You know that Gibbs hasn't been well, don't you?" she asked, hastily.

"You wrote that he wasn't well, some time ago——" Joe began hesitatingly.

"You'll see—a change," Ellen added. "And of course you mustn't let him see that you see it."

"Ellen, he's not ill? My Lord, and we land down here on you——!" Joe exclaimed.

"No—no—no!" she protested. "He's up, and all that, and he'll be perfectly delighted to see you! But he looks—he looks——" She lost control of her voice again.

"I should think this climate would build him up again," Lizzie ventured, a little timidly. Joe looked at her gratefully, and Ellen quickly grasped the thread of comfort.

"Oh, Lizzie, it will—they all say it will!" she said eagerly, wiping her eyes. But immediately they brimmed again, and the dark head and the crushed white hat went down on the back of the seat; she burst into tears. "Oh, Joe—Joe—Joe! He's not going to get well!" she sobbed.

"Ellen!" Joe said, aghast.

"Oh, I know it," Ellen said presently, lifting her head, and resolutely regaining her self-control. "I know it! I am sure he does, too. I'm sorry to break down this way, but I don't often have a chance," she added penitently, with a watery smile. "I never let him see that—that it's killing me, too."

"But, Ellen, what *is* it?" Lizzie asked fearfully.

"Well, he was sick, after that terrible two months, you know," Ellen said, reflectively. "He looked—don't you remember how he looked?"

"Like a ghost," Joe said.

"Like a ghost, yes. I wanted to go back to Paris,

but everything is changed there anyway, and then one day Doctor Cutter said, just casually, 'I'd go somewhere where it's hot and dry, Ellen. He's been under a terrible mental and physical strain and he's managed to get a heavy cold, and there's a little affection of the lung. Joe, how could I ever dream it was *that!* We came to Santa Barbara, and the Perrys wrote us about Los Antonios, and Gibbs *did* seem better, he ate well, and slept pretty well——"

Her voice dropped to utter silence, and they could hear the steady, soft rush of the sea again. Far down, on a crescent of white beach, a thousand gulls rose suddenly from a sandy reef, fluttered about in great curves, and settled again.

"But after awhile," Ellen presently went on, "I saw that he wasn't gaining—I saw that he wasn't gaining! He began to have bad nights, and he didn't eat so well——! After awhile I wrote the Santa Barbara doctor, and he wrote back that just before we left Gibbs had been in to see him, and that he thought he could not improve upon his instructions then: to sleep in the open air, and live simply, and not catch cold. So Gibbs knows, but he never spoke of that call to me.

"Lately," she finished, "he has been keeping to his couch a good deal, he doesn't join us in gardening or picnics, as he did last year. Well! I only wanted to warn you. Perhaps it is my own fancy, partly. And, Joe—what a year we have had! A whole year of Paradise, nothing but each other, and Tom, music, and books and the garden, and the ocean! It has blotted out all the bitterness—wiped out the past. The Perrys called the house 'Arcady,' and we've kept the name—

at first for convenience with the tradespeople, but now because we know it fits!"

She started the car down the grade, presently turning in at an opening in a stone wall that was so smothered in vines, so closely surrounded by low, sprawling oaks, and so much in harmony with the colour scheme of greens and browns about it as to be almost invisible. Along the road they followed now garden flowers and trees had been mingled with the native growth: roses climbed into the oak and cypress and pepper trees, nasturtiums blazed against a whitewashed adobe wall. Presently they came to a long lattice buried in sweetpea vines, the bird-like flowers poised as if for flight.

"Oh, pretty!" Lizzie said, involuntarily. They were close to the house now, and its lower windows were packed about with bloom: bushy marguerites, heliotrope in purple and lavender flower, stock, velvet wallflowers, verbena in purest white and pink, and cream and salmon roses climbing the dark shingles.

"This is the back of the house," Ellen smiled. "You see my gardener is Japanese, and one of their theories is that because a thing is useful it needn't necessarily be hideous. My dishtowels are blue-and-white poems, and the garbage barrels are fat little green buckets that stand in a little niche of vines. Welcome, you darlings! Give me that angel, Lizzie, I want to show her to Gibbs!"

She led them through the wide side hall, where great logs waited in a stone fireplace, and bowls of flowers glowed in a tempered light. Everywhere was simplicity, space, and beauty, whether the windows pressed close to the oak trees, or gave a wide view of the shining ocean.

A glass double door gave upon the great front veranda, and here Ellen ran with the baby.

"I want you to meet Ellen Latimer, Gibbs——!"

It was well that they had been warned of what change they might find in him, for Lizzie caught a quick breath as she saw him, and it required all Joe's presence of mind to go forward and greet him naturally. Fortunately the surprise and confusion of the meeting covered any awkwardness, and before the laughter and excitement had died away the newcomers had grown somewhat used to the altered aspect of the man on the wide couch.

He was still handsome, Gibbs would always be that. But he was painfully thin, and seemed strangely aged. His dark, splendid eyes shone in a thin face whose temples blazed sometimes with an uneasy colour. The ring he always wore was loose on the fine long hand. His hair was an even silvery white.

His manner was changed, too. There was a gravity, a sweetness, and a certain heroic serenity about him that seemed to lift them all into the plane of simple endurance and renunciation. Lizzie and Joe knew, as they settled laughing into porch chairs to talk to him, that Ellen's worst fears were none too grave.

Like Gibbs himself, they must accept the thing as a finality. There was no dispute. They found themselves suddenly confident and gay, as human beings, forced to accept their own helplessness, usually become. This was in the nature of a catastrophe: it was almost as if they had come to California to find that Gibbs was dead.

The exquisite hours went on. Below the dark, cool space of the porch the Pacific spread in a glittering

band. The little crescent of white sand that was their own beach was bared by a lazily receding tide. The garden odours and the resinous smell of the pines were permeated by the bracing salt breath of the sea.

Ellen took Lizzie to the guest-house: a room with windows on three sides, a bathroom at the back, and a winding stair going up to the big sleeping-porch above, which was as open as a deck. A path of flat, deeply-embedded stones, with grass sprouting about them, led to the main house. The kitchen was also in a separate little building, and the Chinese cook and his son, who was the house-boy, had their own tiny dwelling smothered in honeysuckle. Everywhere was the same riot of bloom, the same tumbling and crowding of flowers, against the exquisite background of the oaks and the low manzanitas.

"Little Ellen can sputter and scold here as much as she pleases," Ellen said, putting the baby on the white bed. "I think my gardener's wife will come up from Los Antonios to take care of her. We'll send Adachi in this afternoon."

"Ellen," her brother said, squaring her about for another kiss in brotherly fashion, "are we butting in?"

"Joe, dear! If you can only be happy here, puttering about with us, it will do us all a world of good!"

She looked appealingly straight into his eyes as she said it, but she did not ask him the expected question. Ellen was afraid of the words.

When Pong, the house-boy, in his plum colour and pale green, came noiselessly to the porch to announce luncheon, Tommy burst in, a sturdy brown Tommy, frantic with excitement at seeing his adored uncle and aunt again. He was with difficulty persuaded to rush

off and transfer some of the dirt on his hands to a towel, and returned with the centre lock of his bushy hair dampened and combed amid a tousled mass that had not been touched.

Yet even in Tommy Joe saw the change that a great shadow brings to even the children of a household. He was all tenderness and devotion with his father, and he had a most unchildish fashion of entering into his mother's mood. When the grass under the oaks was barred with straight lines of shadow from the sinking sun, and a lingering twilight fell flat and soft over the ocean, Tommy, like the others, fell silent, his dark head resting against his father's arm, a big book opened on his knees. And when Ellen presently called him, there was none of the usual childish protest. He went in, and they heard Ellen's fingers on the piano, and then the tones of his violin.

"He plays wonderfully!" Lizzie said, when the simple air died away.

"He plays well for such a child," Gibbs conceded. "And he loves it, which is half the battle. I hope Ellen will make a musician of him!"

Lizzie winced away from the quiet intimation that Ellen alone must control Tommy's destiny, but Joe missed the inference, and said surprisedly:

"Do you really want him to be a musician?"

"I think so," Gibbs answered. "A man with temperament is wretched in any one of the fast-bound professions. Art is a safety-valve; it will make him an exacting mistress!"

He was silent again; the others knew that he saw the Ellen of the years to come with the growing boy beside her.

CHAPTER XIX

Two or three days later Gibbs proposed a beach luncheon. Ellen, brightly indifferent when he first suggested it, was fired with sudden enthusiasm and delight when it transpired that he himself planned to go, too.

"Gibbs! It won't tire you!"

"Tire me! Half a mile straight down-hill!"

"Oh, that's splendid! And it's such a glorious morning! And I've chops—and I think he has a cake——" Ellen flashed off to the kitchen, where she and Lizzie were presently in the full glory of packing. Lizzie heard her tell Adachi to bring the car down to the beach at half-past three, but her face was radiant all the while. "Oh, he is better!" she said over and over again, as she buttered bread and trimmed oiled paper.

They set off in a straggling line: Tommy leaping ahead with his dog, and circling them as senselessly; Gibbs and Joe following, the latter with his tiny daughter in his arms. After them came Ellen with a plaid and an umbrella, Lizzie with the two thermos bottles, and Pong with the loaded basket.

"I have never seen a man as infatuated with a tiny scrap of humanity as Joe is with the baby!" Ellen smiled. "Does it make you jealous, Lizzie?"

"Oh, Ellen, no!" Lizzie said, horrified. "I didn't realize—I don't think he did—what the baby was going

to mean!" she added presently. "The night she was born—I'll never forget his face! I had been ill, you know, all the time, and I had thought sometimes that I mightn't live, and that *that* was the way it was all to end! And then came that fearful pain and—bewilderment——"

"I know!" Ellen nodded.

"And when I suddenly came out of it all, and found there was nothing wrong, but a sweet little girl asleep in a crib, why, it all seemed to clear itself!" Lizzie explained. "And Joe came and sat staring at the baby, and after awhile he said: 'You ought to see her breathe, Lizzie, and the way she works her little fingers!' I laughed and said: 'Didn't you *think* she was going to breathe?' And he looked at me, sort of puzzled, and said: 'Gosh, Lizzie, I don't know what I thought!'"

Lizzie laughed merrily, and Ellen laughed with her.

"But I knew what he meant," Lizzie resumed, "for we both were really amazed to find ourselves well and young and at home again, with this *darling*——! And I said to myself, Ellen, that the past was gone. I was Joe's wife, and Ellen's mother, and the happiest and richest woman in the world! If God forgives us, sometimes I think it's a sin not to forgive ourselves. So if ever I find myself blue, I just think that."

"And the consequence is, that you don't find yourself blue!" Ellen said gaily.

"Oh, I'm too happy! Joe—" Lizzie said. She gave Ellen a bride's half-shamed, half-mischievous smile— "Joe is an angel!" announced Lizzie.

Then they were at the beach, and the centre of a joyous activity. Gibbs was settled, with the plaid,

on a warm curve of rocks, where he pulled his cap over his eyes, and watched them all placidly. Lizzie found another natural chair, where she sank down with her baby, gazing with dreamy content at the glittering water, steeped in the peace that the tugging, busy little lips at her breast seemed to enhance rather than interrupt. Then little Ellen was settled on the pillows under the umbrella, and Lizzie gaily joined the workers. A hundred times, on this memorably happy day, Ellen found herself watching Lizzie's little white figure, her happy, youthful face. Lizzie was just twenty: what *might* have been her destiny at twenty?

Joe was trimming bamboo sticks to serve as broilers. Enamelled cups were set out upon a smooth rock. The delicious smoke of a driftwood fire began to rise in the still air. The tide was falling, but an occasional great wave came bubbling through the rocks, and caused a joyous panic. Tommy slipped and scrambled about, gathering starfish, sea-urchins, and periwinkles to domicile in a pool.

The tireless, sweet green water rose and fell; each wave formed an emerald arch of itself before it broke with a long, splitting crash, to rush in, level and incredibly swift, flinging itself upward against impeding rocks, and curving over the white sand. Gibbs watched it in a delicious lull of body and soul. So much of it—such splendidly wasted beauty and energy, year after year. How pitiful was even the fullest, even the longest human life, against this glorious miracle that went on year after year throughout the centuries, that had been as old as the world when Padre Junipera Serra walked along these shores.

Joe clattered near him on the rocks. He tilted the

cap over his eyes a trifle, and glanced at the absorbed group by the fire.

"Manage to speak to me alone a minute, sometime, will you, Joe?" Gibbs said.

Joe, not moving his eyes from the defiant crab that had wedged his little body tightly in a crevice of rock, cleared his throat.

"Sure!" he answered, gruffly.

Ellen also had her word alone with Joe. It was after luncheon, when Lizzie had curled up like a child on a patch of warm sand, and fallen asleep, and Gibbs was apparently dozing. Tommy was wading along the bubbling line of foam, and the baby slept on.

"Isn't she pretty?" Ellen said, indicating Lizzie. Joe grinned with pride.

"She's awful cute, Lizzie," he agreed. "She's smart, too; she's as good a cook as Aunt Elsie ever was—Auntie says so herself!"

"How does the old house seem without Grandpa?" Ellen asked. For the old Captain had recently started on a last cruise, under sealed orders.

"About the same. Old Mrs. Cook lives there now, she and Aunt Elsie are pretty well informed on village topics," Joe answered with a laugh.

"You knew Harriet and George were here last summer, Joe," Ellen ventured. "Do you ever see Harriet now?"

"No," he answered indifferently. "She's a queer sort of girl. What's she doing—collecting *plates!*"

"She has a remarkable china collection," Ellen admitted, laughing at his tone.

"China collection! What's that for a woman to do!"

Joe stretched comfortably in the sun. "Oh, well," he said leniently, "that's all right, if she likes it. Harriet's nice enough, but she's spoiled by too much money. She's entirely different from Lizzie," Joe added seriously; "she didn't have a sensible upbringing, to begin with."

"Yet you liked her very much once, Joe," Ellen suggested, from the depth of deep amusement and satisfaction.

"Oh, yes—kid love! I never really loved any one but Lizzie," said Joe. Ellen saw that he really believed it, and with a great sigh of thankfulness she laid one of life's ghosts to rest forever. "I'd like to go down to Los Antonios some day," Joe mused, "and see what sort of opening there might be in—well, for instance, in starting a paper there."

"But, Joe—there'd be no money in that?" Ellen asked, in surprise.

"There might be a living," he answered. "I haven't said anything to Lizzie, but I talked to Gibbs about it. I'd like to live here, and have a little bungalow, and a bunch of kids, and I think Lizzie'd go crazy! I'm seriously thinking about it. I could have a little jitney, and go back and forth——"

"You could have a slice of Arcady," Ellen promised eagerly; "we've twenty acres here, and there are dozens of house-sites!"

"We'll see." Joe yawned again, blinking at the sun. "By the way, Ellen," he added, more animatedly. "You knew that Lillian had remarried?"

"Just that, through George. Have you heard anything more? It was Lindsay Pepper, of course."

"It was Lindsay Pepper. But the strange thing,

young George Lathrop told me, was that she didn't really want to do it."

"She lost some money by it, under the will, you know."

"Yes, but not only that. She and the old lady don't hit it off at all well, and all his money comes from his mother. Besides that, Lillian would rather have been a rich widow, you know—at all events, she did deliberately try to get out of it."

"But, Joe, I don't see why she couldn't!"

"Oh, he had a tremendous hold on her. You see his name was mixed up with hers in the whole business. If she didn't care for him, she never should have been away from home the night of the accident! I suppose he simply forced her hand. Funny thing," Joe added reminiscently. "When I first met her she had all the cards: beauty, youth, a rich man's wife. Now she's married to a man four years younger than herself, who isn't exactly a teetotaller you know, and whom she supports—well, that's coming to her. They run about a good deal, and have a speed car, and all that, but it isn't exactly enviable, somehow."

"Poor Lillian!" Ellen said thoughtfully. Her eyes went to Gibbs, dozing on the rocks, and a sorrowful look filled them. "I wish I hadn't hated her!" she said softly.

"*You* haven't much to regret!" Joe assured her, rolling over for a nap. They did not speak again until the car grated on the sandy road a few feet above them.

They all saw that the day had tired Gibbs. He was a little stiff as Joe helped him to the car, and there was

an anxious look in Ellen's eyes until she had him established in the spacious, pleasant order of the porch again, and was personally superintending his slow drinking of a glass of milk. Her keen eyes saw the relief with which he lowered his long body into the softness and smoothness of the couch, and a terror of self-reproach smote her.

But he seemed to recover rapidly. Presently he was smiling and listening again in his usual way, and Ellen went off with Lizzie, to share the delight of preparing the baby for bed, and to talk over little Ellen's last meal of the day.

Tommy, in a glorious splashing and spattering, was profusely watering the garden, and Joe came over to the couch, and sat down at Gibbs's side.

"I'm afraid our descending on you this way has been a good deal of a tax," Joe said regretfully.

Gibbs had been lying with closed eyes, and the sunken hollows about them filled Joe with concern. But now he opened them and smiled, and stretched out a hand to clasp Joe's fingers.

"Always welcome, at any time, dear boy," he said kindly. "But more than ordinarily welcome now. I had thought of sending for you—but one puts things off—and there's always the danger of alarming Ellen——"

Never had Joe felt the other man's extraordinary charm as he felt it now, when Gibbs Josselyn, at the end of a perfect September day, confided to his care the things he loved best in life. It seemed to Joe that all the world listened to the rich echo of Gibbs's old voice, for he was speaking softly, and making no effort to be heard. Joe had to bend near to catch some of the words.

"You see, old man, she's going to need you soon.

And that is why I am glad you really are interested in establishing yourself in Los Antonios. She'll go away, for awhile, but she loves this place—and if you and Lizzie and a troop of children are here——"

Tommy was directing a strong stream from his hose straight into the low, spreading branches of an oak, the water surged and dripped among the stiff, thick leaves. From the soaking garden came a wave of scent. Joe, thinking of this talk afterward, always heard through it the subdued rush and tumble of the sea, and saw lines of sunset light streaming through oaks and pepper trees across a California garden.

"You and Lizzie will look out for her," Gibbs added, after a silence. "And the baby will do more than any one! And I think of her, with books, and her garden, and Tommy, and Tommy's music—— He's an odd child, but she understands him, and his mistakes won't be the ordinary mistakes——"

He smiled at Joe, and somehow Joe smiled back, although the younger man felt tears hot behind his eyes.

"Won't be my mistakes," Gibbs said musingly. "It was all too easy for me. It was always plain sailing, and that's not—not exactly disciplinary, you know. I never cared much about the other fellow's troubles—Ellen's the one for that—and now, lying here, Joe, for the past few months, it's come to me as a sort of revelation that even in this I'm having it easy. If I've never had any particular pity for the fellows who haven't enough money, or had sick wives, or had to sit on an office stool eight hours a day—I certainly can't expect the world to stand still with sympathy because one man happens to be going out a little ahead of time!"

Joe could find nothing to say, and after a moment Gibbs spoke again, more briskly:

"Well! There was another thing I wanted to say to you, and I'll say it, and then we needn't take this up again. George Lathrop was here last summer, and we went into this a little. He seemed to feel that we might be making too much of this, and he sent a specialist down from San Francisco—Ellen never knew why he came, he happened to have been in Williams with me, and his wife came, and all that. But that's not the point: the thing is that I know how George feels about Ellen, he's always adored her. I mean that he makes a sort of little patron saint of her. Every other woman in his life is judged by Ellen. Now, some day—she'll be lonely; Tommy'll need a man's hand, George will be his guardian anyway—some day, George will tell her—he can't help it—what she is to him! And that's where I want you to use your own judgment, Joe. I can't tell her this, of course. And also there's a chance that she may honestly not want to marry any one! But if she lets any thought of *me*——

"You might tell her then," he added, in a low tone, "that the purest and best and sweetest thing in my life was what she gave me—that no man ever owed a woman the debt I owe her!"

The voice stopped. It was twilight now; there was no more sunlight under the oaks, and Tommy and his hose were gone. The ocean moved like molten lead, wrinkling softly into opalescent gray and blue and silver.

"Well!" Gibbs said briefly. "That's all."

In the long silence Lizzie slipped out, and buried the glimmer of her white gown in a wide porch chair.

"If this isn't Heaven!" she breathed, contentedly. A moment later Tommy's little twilight concert began. They could see a pool of warm red light about the piano, in the big sitting room, and Ellen's bent dark head, and the little dark head over her shoulder.

"There will be a splendid moon to-night," Gibbs told them.

He and Ellen watched it together, hours later, when Tommy was long in bed, and when Lizzie and Joe had stumbled away, as happily tired and sleepy as the child was.

Then Ellen sat in her favourite seat, a low hassock beside his couch, so that her arms lightly rested against him, and their fingers were laced. They had no light, and could look across the low, broad rail of the porch, straight into the sleeping garden, and down the sloping sides of the little cañon to the sea. Silver moonlight poured in a mysterious flood over the rounded tops of the oak trees, and lay like an enchantment on the dewy roses and wallflowers. The surface of the sea heaved softly, its far-flung horizon seemed floating in etherea light.

"Et in Arcadia ego," Ellen said.

"We've had more than one Arcady, Ellen," her husband answered. "And this has seemed to me not less perfect, but more perfect, somehow, because it is not to last!"

He heard the quick rise of her breast, and felt a faint tightening of her fingers.

"It has seemed right, somehow, to spend this year with you and Tommy, here—hasn't it been a perfect year!"

"I won't *allow* you to talk so, Gibbs," she said, determinedly, but unsteadily.

"Just this once!" he answered, and she could tell by his tone that he was smiling. His wonderful smile —the smile he had given little snubbed Ellen Latimer, when he drove her to New York in his car! She felt her throat tighten.

"No formal good-byes," Gibbs said. "Not that! For if you don't know what you are to me, Ellen, what I've felt as you poured all your goodness and sweetness and faith over me——"

With a sudden movement she laid her face against his hand, and he felt that her eyes were wet.

"Gibbs, *please*——!"

"Well, I won't. But there's one thing——! When Tommy's older, tell him the truth. There's a time in a boy's life when it makes a lasting impression on him to realize that you—you can't play with fire. You pay, one way or another. I'm paying this way. There's too much else for a man to do, Ellen—too many things need changing for any sane man, or any woman, to go right on into the thirties with the egotism of the teens. And that brings me to the other thing. Some day, if you feel like it, I wish you'd do something for some kid who has gotten himself in wrong with the authorities—I don't know exactly how—I wonder now, lying here, how I could ever have lived in a big city, and not realized that there are fellows who haven't anything like my natural advantages, and who get up against misunderstandings and misinterpretations——"

"I thought," Ellen said steadily, "that when you are better, if we ever go back, I'd go to Mary Cutter, because she is interested in all that sort of thing, and

just follow the cases in some court. One couldn't do much, of course. But there would always be something, a visit to a mother, or perhaps a word here or there——"

"What a little saint you are, Ellen! Just a little inspired saint, that's all!" Gibbs exclaimed. "That's just what I mean. The law is all right, of course. It must be what it is. But I tell you, Ellen, that it's enough to drive the decency and the good out of any man. The coldness, the carelessness, the smells, and dirt——"

"You must forget all about it," she said. "You never did anything to deserve a prison experience—it was all a horrible mistake!"

"It was a mistake from a human standpoint," Gibbs conceded thoughtfully, "but I don't know about my record in a higher tribunal. I wonder how many of the fellows serving life terms now ever had an angel for a mother, and a saint for a wife, clothes and friends and warm food from the hour they were born, always money to buy prestige and service and preference——i Ellen, if I had my life to live over again, do you know what I think it would be? According to the principal that until every other man had it, I didn't want it, and until every other child had it, I didn't want my son to have it—whatever it was, travel, clothes, education, toys, everything!"

"I suppose that's loving your neighbour as yourself," added Ellen's thoughtful voice.

"Well, you go to old George, and he and Mary Cutter will help you find the cases you're after——" Gibbs was beginning again. But she laid her hand lightly over his lips.

"Don't talk that way—not as if——!"

Her cheek was laid against his hand again. He put his free hand softly on her head. And even through her thick, dark hair Ellen felt the chill of his fingers.

THE END

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